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NOVEMBER 2002 NO. 53

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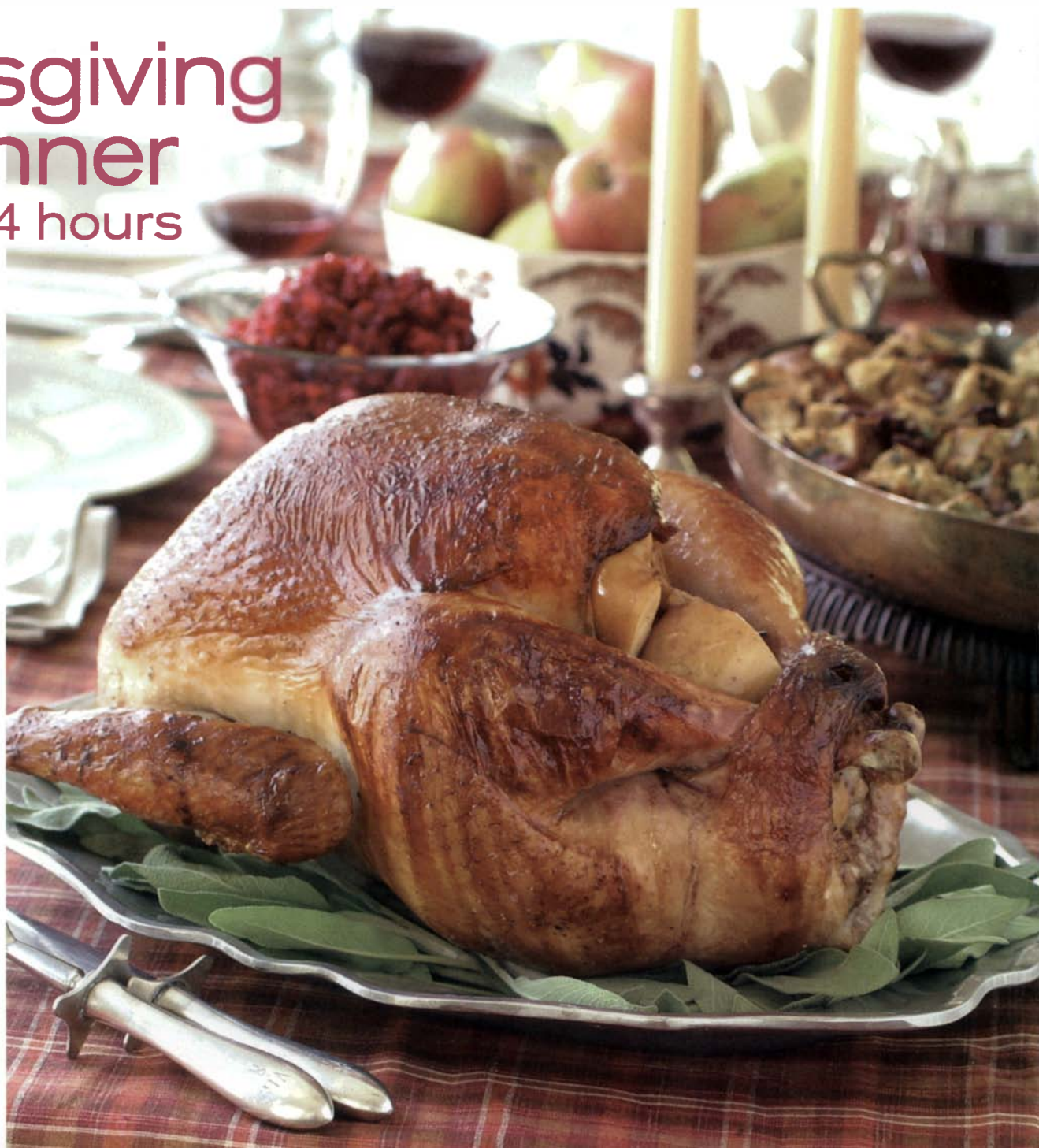
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in under 4 hours

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chicken
sautés

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almond cake

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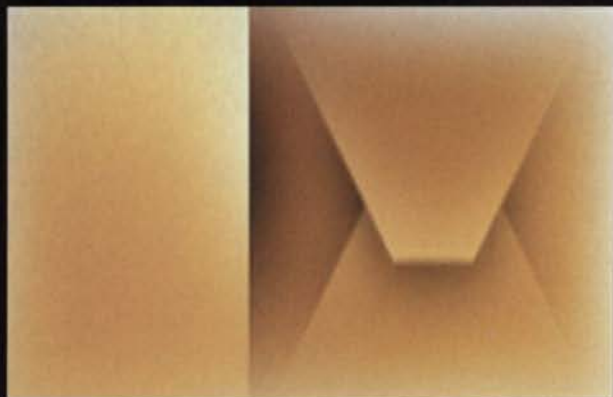


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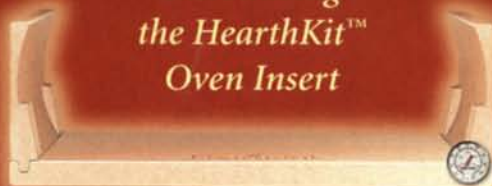
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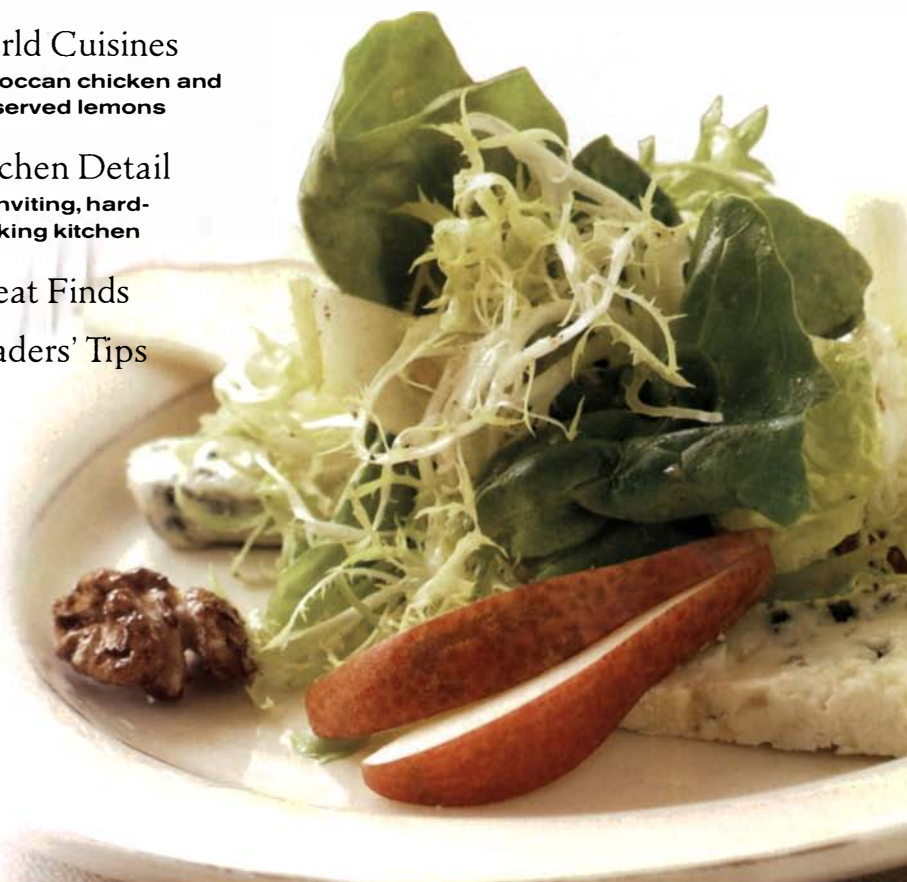
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Four dinner party ideas

Putting together a menu for a party is a fun but challenging task. To help with your plans, we offer some of our own ideas for entertaining menus, made up of recipes in this issue of *Fine Cooking*. We hope these, as well as our Thanksgiving menu (p. 44) and our Dinner with Friends menu (p. 68), will help make your fall entertaining exciting and delicious.

Friday Night, Spanish Style

**Toasted salted almonds
and sliced Manchego
cheese**

Spanish Rice with Shrimp
p. 94C

**Endive Salad with Blue
Cheese & Pears** p. 70

For an easy starter, set out a bowl of toasted salted almonds and some Manchego. Fino sherry is a classic accompaniment for these Spanish tapas. The salad makes a nice finale; to save time, substitute store-bought spiced nuts for the walnuts.

Family Gathering

**Rolled Chicken Breasts with
Prosciutto & Asparagus** p. 94C

Oven-Roasted Potatoes p. 51

**Browned Brussels Sprouts
with Hazelnuts & Lemon** p. 49

**Roasted Pears with
Caramel Sauce** p. 75
with vanilla ice cream

Everyone will like this crowd-pleasing menu—even the Brussels sprouts, which take on a rich, nutty flavor when browned. But if you're doubtful, serve the Green Beans with Mushrooms, Cream & Toasted Breadcrumbs (p. 55) instead.

Trattoria Menu

Frico p. 82
with cocktails

Ragù alla Bolognese p. 67
with penne pasta

**Warm Spinach Salad with
Bacon, Walnuts & Goat
Cheese** p. 94C

**Fresh figs or plums with
crème fraîche and honey**

Make the frico and the Bolognese up to two days ahead. For a simple dessert, serve quartered fresh figs or plums with a dollop of crème fraîche and a drizzle of honey.

Special Occasion

**Rack of Pork with an
Herb-Mustard Crust** p. 51

**Yukon Gold
Gruyère Galette** p. 59

**Green Beans with Pancetta,
Garlic & Herbs** p. 56

**Brown-Butter
Almond Cake** p. 74

Make the galette and the cake a day ahead. Braise the beans on the stovetop while the rack is in the oven. Serve the pork, galette, and beans with a bottle of Syrah from southwestern France.

Note: Be sure to check each recipe's yield as you may have to double or halve a recipe, depending on how many people you're serving.

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I KNOW IT'S A HOLIDAY, BUT IS IT THANKSGIVING OR THE FOURTH OF JULY?

As we go to press, we find ourselves in a strange parallel universe of entertaining. We've just finished photographing Diane Morgan's clever "Thanksgiving Dinner in Four Hours," which really can be prepared that quickly and is so delicious that you'll want to make it even if you've got days to cook. Ditto for Katy Sparks's scrumptious menu featuring beef tenderloin—our first installment in a new series called Dinner with Friends, which will appear several times each year.

Once we leave the office, however, we're in the thick of summer entertaining: Fourth of July, block parties, wedding showers, visiting relatives (our executive editor will be feeding 20 family members for two weeks this summer).

The mood of the food is different in each season, but what remains the same is the desire to craft a menu that works in all aspects: Does each dish build up to the next and complement the last? Will everything look pretty and stay hot or cold? And—most perplexing for many people—how can I pull it all off with my schedule and my kitchen?

A dream menu can turn into a nightmare if it keeps you out of commission until dessert. Having your spouse relate, after the fact, how much the guests loved the food isn't quite the same as enjoying the moment yourself.

We'd like to hear about your entertaining challenges so that we can work to offer solutions in future articles. So send us your dilemmas, issues, problems—and your own great methods for stress-free entertaining—whether it's for burgers on the grill or a five-course dinner for twelve.

—Martha Holmberg, editor in chief

May I recommend the jerk lobster?

I'm a Jamaican currently living in Sweden. Mark Henry's article, "From Jamaica, Spicy Barbecue Chicken" (*Fine Cooking* #51, p. 24) brought back memories of a recent visit home. While Jamaica's Boston Bay is famous for its authentic jerk chicken, it also offers a mouthwatering jerk lobster that's well worth the 2½-hour

drive from Kingston. The spicy flavors of the jerk seasonings provide a delicious counterpart to the sweet lobster meat. This is a must for any visitor to Jamaica.

—Janine Fisher,
Hagersten, Sweden

On a quest for great cheese

I just discovered the Cheese of the Month articles on your site (www.finecooking.com). What a



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great idea! I bought Laura Werlin's book, *The New American Cheese*, a few years ago and have been fascinated with the many kinds of cheese being made in this country.

When I travel, I try to find local cheesemakers to sample their cheese, or I choose a cheese that I've read about and order it from the makers. Two of my favorites (besides the ones you've already covered) are Vermont Fontina from the Vermont Butter & Cheese Company and Raclette from the Leelanau Cheese Company at Black Star Farms. There are many more!

—Becky Steadman,
via e-mail

Hot recipe for pasta, really

I made the Spaghetti with Shrimp in Curry Cream Sauce from *Fine Cooking* #50 (p. 49) and it was very good except that it seemed to have way too much curry powder in it: 1 tablespoon. It was quite overpowering, and I broke out into a sweat (and I do like spicy foods). I used garam masala. It seems to me the measure should be more like 1 to 2 teaspoons. What do you think?

—Jacquelyn Wilson Grattan,
via e-mail

Editor's reply: Sorry about the incendiary sauce! The amount listed in the recipe is correct, but perhaps we should have specified that we meant plain old generic curry powder from the grocery store, which generally is fairly mild. Your garam masala, which is a mix of Indian spices, was probably more complex and flavorful than "curry powder" but clearly much hotter. I had the same experience myself when I was teaching a class. I was making mussels in a curried cream sauce, and I chose a very pretty box of curry powder from the cooking school spice rack. When I went to taste the sauce in front

of the students I practically choked (unlike you, I don't handle spice heat well). After everyone stopped laughing (including me), I just added more cream and cilantro and we all enjoyed the dish—with a big glass of water, mind you.

I hope you try the pasta recipe again, adjusting it for your particular curry powder.

Makes sense to me, but don't ask me why

In the last issue you discussed the technique for chiffonade of basil. I may be crazy, and I can't explain why this works, but if you roll the basil from stem to tip and cut parallel with the leaf vein, the basil does not blacken as quickly. I'm a personal chef and food appearance is as important to me as taste.

—Jackie Clark, via e-mail

Ladies and gentlemen, start your ovens...

...we're about to publish our first special issue: *Holiday Baking*. We've filled the pages with beautiful holiday pies, luscious cakes, buttery cookies, crumbly coffee cakes, crunchy biscotti, tender challah. We're also stressing stress-free holidays, with tips for do-ahead, gorgeous decorating methods that even the "pastry-challenged" can master, ideas for wrapping and giving, and advice on the right ingredients and equipment. A Christmas-cookie fold-out and a special section on super-quick appetizers and desserts with frozen puff pastry make this issue the only baking guide you'll need this year. Look for it in early November, in your mailbox or at the newsstand.

^{fine}Cooking ...around the country

September 23-25: Editor in chief Martha Holmberg teaches classes at Central Market Cooking Schools in **Texas**: on the 23rd in **Dallas**, 214-361-5754; on the 24th in **Ft. Worth**, 817-377-9005, and on the 25th in **Plano**, 469-241-9339. For details, visit www.centralmarket.com.

October 17, 19, 23: Contributing editor Molly Stevens conducts classes at Sur La Table stores on the 17th in **Salt Lake City**, 801-456-0280; on the 19th in **Scottsdale, Arizona**, 480-998-0118; and on the 23rd in **Newport Beach, California**, 949-640-0200. Visit www.surlatable.com for details.

November 8-10: *Fine Cooking* exhibits at the Seattle Cooks! Gourmet Food & Kitchen Show in downtown **Seattle**. For information, call 206-516-3052 or visit www.seattlecooks.com.

November 14, 15: Molly Stevens conducts classes at Sur La Table stores, on the 14th in **Chicago** and on the 15th in **Arlington, Virginia**. For details, visit www.surlatable.com.

November 19, 20: Martha Holmberg teaches classes at Cooks of Crocus Hill schools in **Minnesota**, in **Edina**, 952-285-1903, and **St. Paul**, 651-228-1333.

Plus: In the **Boston area**, listen for senior editor Amy Albert on "The Cooking Couple" on WPLM 1390 AM and WBNW 1120 AM. In the **Seattle area**, listen for contributing editor Abby Dodge on Brian Poor's "Poor Man's Kitchen" on KOMO radio. And tune into Jennifer Bushman's "Nothing to It" program on selected NBC and Fox stations in **Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Wyoming** to see demonstrations of *Fine Cooking* recipes. Check local listings for times.

Please share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies. Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com.

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TIM GAISER ("Pinot Noir," p. 26) was glad for the chance to gush about one of his favorite wines. A master sommelier, Tim is a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*. He has worked in all phases of the wine industry, including spending five years as a senior buyer at Virtual Vineyards/Wine.com. He lives in San Francisco, where he works as a wine consultant.

"You can do it!" says **DIANE MORGAN** of "Thanksgiving in Four Hours," p. 44. Diane is a cooking teacher and cookbook author who spent six years in Chicago as a caterer and chef before settling in Portland, Oregon, to concentrate on teaching and writing. She has written seven cookbooks, including *The Thanksgiving Table* and *Dressed To Grill: Savvy Recipes for Girls who Play with Fire*. She writes a regular column for *The Los Angeles Times*.



Tim Gaiser



Biba Caggiano



Anne Willan

ANNE WILLAN ("Pork Loin," p. 50) is one of the preeminent food writers and teachers and is an authority on French cooking technique. She continues to direct the cooking schools she founded, La Varenne at the Château du Feÿ in France and La Varenne at The Greenbrier resort in West Virginia. She is working on *Good Food, No Fuss*, due out next spring. Anne was honored in 1995 as Grande Dame of Les Dames d'Escoffier International.

EVE FELDER ("Green Beans," p. 54) grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, in a family that always cooked its green beans until they were fully tender. A former chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, she graduated with honors from The Culinary

Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, and is now the school's associate dean for advanced cooking.

SUSIE MIDDLETON ("Potato Galette," p. 57) is *Fine Cooking's* executive editor. Savory wedges of potato galette were popular take-out items at the gourmet market where she worked in Newport, Rhode Island.

Editor at large **MARYELLEN DRISCOLL** ("Quick Chicken Sautés," p. 60) is no stranger to cooking with chicken. She and her husband raise chickens on pasture at their farm in upstate New York. For a listing of farms in your area that sell pastured poultry, she recommends that you go to www.eatwild.com.

When her husband's work brought the couple to Sacramento, **BIBA CAGGIANO** ("Ragù alla Bolognese," p. 64),

KATY SPARKS ("Dinner with Friends," p. 68) was the executive chef at Quilty's in New York. Now she's opening her own restaurant in Manhattan, which will be called Katy. A graduate of Johnson & Wales culinary school, Katy earned her stripes at some of New York's finest restaurants, including the Quilted Giraffe. But she confesses that she still gets just a little nervous before hosting a dinner party at home.



homesick for the foods of her youth, opened Biba's restaurant, where she could cook the traditional dishes of Bologna. Sixteen years later, Biba still shows up each morning in her chef's whites ready for work. She recently wrote *Biba's Taste of Italy*, the latest of her seven books.

KATHERINE EASTMAN SEELEY ("Almond Cake," p. 73) discovered the tasty flavor combination of ground nuts and browned butter when learning to make madeleines and other miniature dessert cakes at The French Culinary Institute in Manhattan. Her love for baking led her to dive into professional baking, finding her niche at Sweet Melissa Pâtisserie in Brooklyn. She now works from home in Norwalk, Connecticut, as a food stylist, recipe developer, and writer.

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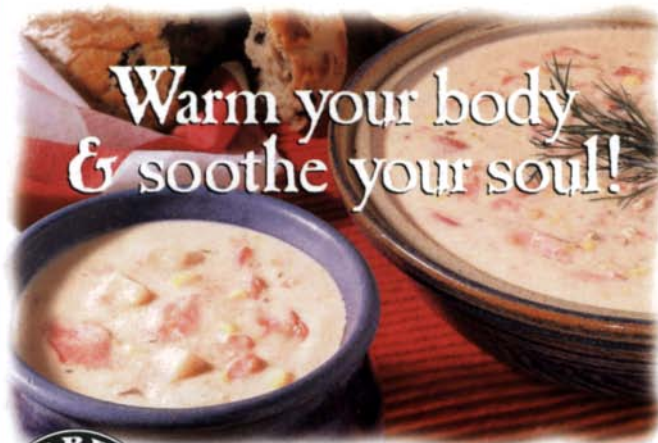
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Apple Days

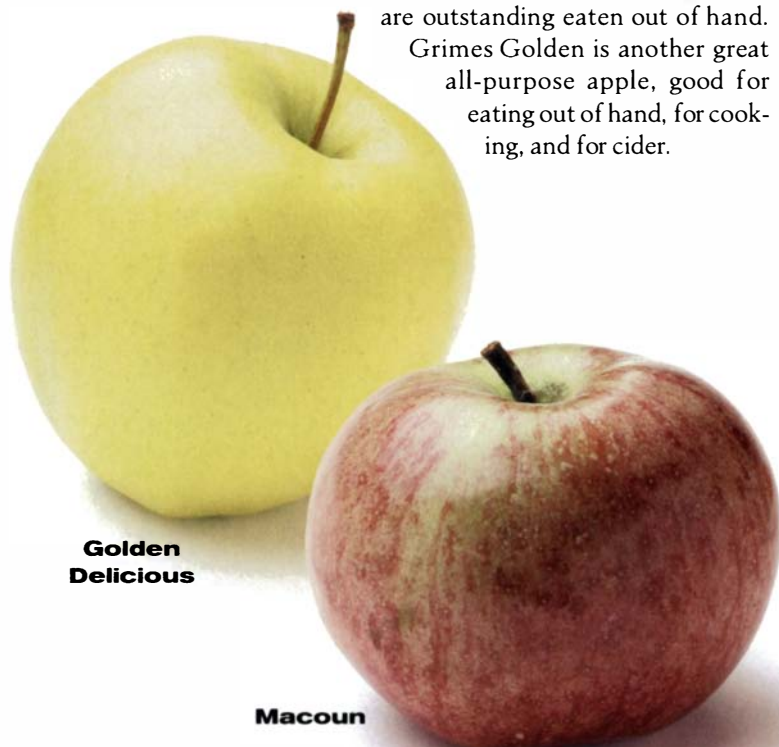
BY RUTH LIVELY

If I had to choose one kind of fruit above all others, I'd pick apples. Luckily, we don't have to make such choices, but if we did, apples would serve us well. They have an incredibly long season: The earliest ones start ripening in high summer, and the harvest continues straight through until frost. And apples keep well, too.

Apples range in taste from just plain sweet to spicy-sweet to tart; in texture from downright hard to crisp and juicy to dry to mealy; and in color from blackish red to palest yellow. Some are tender skinned, others have thick, waxy coats, and still others, the russets, have tough, leathery skins.

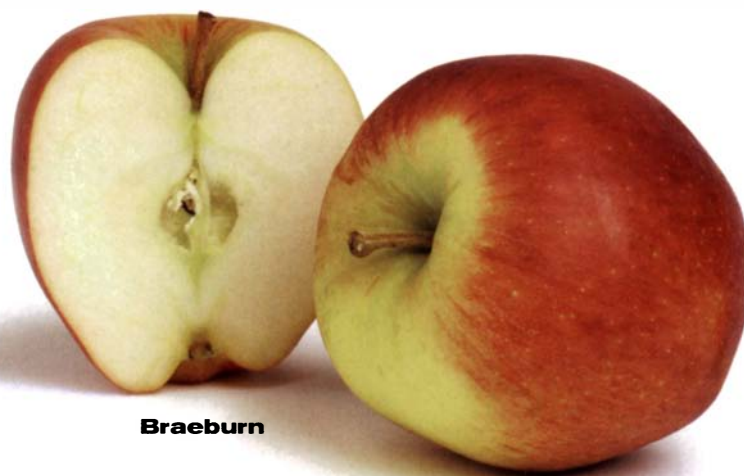
I prefer apples that are sweet-tart, with a definite spicy note. My hands-down favorite for eating out of hand is a Macoun (pronounce the OU as in OUT). At its best, a Macoun is crisp and juicy with just the right blend of sweetness and spice, and a good quotient of acidity. Sometimes this variety can be mealy, so try one before buying a big bag of them. Braeburn is another favorite, and very reliable; it keeps its shape well when cooked. Golden Delicious is a good-tasting cooking apple, but it turns into a purée when it cooks down. When fresh and locally grown, Golden Delicious are outstanding eaten out of hand.

Grimes Golden is another great all-purpose apple, good for eating out of hand, for cooking, and for cider.



Golden Delicious

Macoun



Braeburn

Use apples in chutneys, tarts, stuffings, and salads

While most people think of pie when you mention apples, these versatile fruits can be enjoyed raw, cooked, dried, pressed for sweet or hard cider, and in savory preparations as well as sweet.

FRY SLICED APPLES in a little butter or oil. After browning them, sprinkle a little sugar into the pan and cook the apples slowly until they're limp and lightly caramelized. Serve with roast pork or country sausage, flaky biscuits, and milk gravy.

ARRANGE AN EASY, ELEGANT SALAD of fall greens like endive, escarole hearts, or spinach with slices of tart apple, blue cheese, and a sprinkling of toasted walnuts or hazelnuts. Before arranging, dress the greens in a vinaigrette made with walnut or hazelnut oil and sherry vinegar.

OR MAKE A MEAL-SIZE SALAD of fall greens with a balsamic vinaigrette. Top the greens with sautéed chicken livers, caramelized onions, and raw or briefly sautéed chunks of apple.

A QUICK APPLE CHUTNEY makes a sweet-savory garnish for roasted meats or winter squash. In a

heavy pan, sauté thinly sliced sweet onions until caramelized, and then add chopped apples. When the apples have browned, add walnuts and dried currants, tart cherries, or cranberries and cook, stirring occasionally, until the apples are tender. Add a generous dose of balsamic vinegar and cook briefly until the vinegar reduces to a syrupy glaze.

USE APPLES TO SEASON ROASTING BIRDS. Before roasting turkey, duck, or goose, season the cavity with salt and pepper and fill it with chunks of tart apples, coarsely chopped onion, and sprigs of sage or rosemary.

MAKE AN APPLE PAN SAUCE FOR CHICKEN. Season bone-in chicken pieces or small Cornish game hens with salt and pepper and brown them on all sides. Remove them from the pan, add coarsely chopped apples and onions, and brown. Return the chicken or game hens to the pan and add some dry white wine, broth, or water. Cover and simmer gently until the poultry is done.

SPICY APPLE BUTTER makes a great spread for toast or biscuits. Gently simmer cut-up (Continued)



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READER SERVICE NO. 88

Grown-Up Applesauce

Yields about 1 quart.

Vanilla bean and a splash of brandy lift this elegant sauce out of the realm of nursery food. Delicious warm or at room temperature, it's great as a snack on its own, and it makes a nice filling for a blind-baked pastry shell or for crêpes. Spoon leftovers over French toast. I like to make this sauce with Macouns, or a blend of mostly Braeburns with one or two Golden Delicious.

8 apples, peeled, cored and cut into chunks (roughly about 1-inch each)

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons water

½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise

3 to 4 tablespoons granulated sugar

1 to 2 tablespoons brandy

Put the apples, butter, and water in a heavy saucepan. Tuck the vanilla bean in among the apples, cover the pan, set it over medium heat, and simmer until the apples are completely tender and have cooked to a rough purée, stirring them gently from time to time, 20 to 25 minutes. Add the sugar, stir, and continue cooking uncovered for a few minutes to let the sugar dissolve. Taste the sauce for sweetness; it should be tart-sweet (this is grown-up applesauce, after all), but if you want it sweeter, add more sugar. Stir in the brandy and simmer a few minutes more to cook off a little of the alcohol. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. I like to leave the vanilla bean in the applesauce to steep; remove it before serving. If not serving the same day, refrigerate for up to a week.



apples—not peeled or cored—in a very little bit of water, stirring frequently, until the apples grow tender and lose their shape. Run the softened apples through a food mill, return the purée to the pan, and season with a generous amount of sugar and a little ground cloves, cinnamon, and allspice. Add apple-cider vinegar for complexity and punch. Cook the purée over low heat and stir often until the mixture is thick and spreadable.

MAKE INDIVIDUAL

APPLE TARTLETS. Roll out 7-inch rounds of plain pastry. Lay very thin slices of apple in the center, overlapping them slightly and leaving a 1-inch margin all around. Brush the apples with melted butter, sprinkle sugar over them, and dust lightly with ground nutmeg, cinnamon, or mace. Fold in and pleat the pastry edges. Bake the tartlets in a medium-hot oven until the crusts are browned.

FOR A DELICIOUS

APPLE DUMPLING, wrap a whole cored, peeled apple in a square of pie pastry. Before closing the pastry, fill the center of the apple with brown sugar and a nub of butter. Bring the edges of the pastry up, pinch them to seal, and bake for an hour at 350°F. Serve with cream.

MAKE BAKED APPLES.

Set cored apples in a shallow baking dish and fill the centers with brown sugar,

butter, nut pieces, and dried fruits—try raisins, currants, cherries, cranberries, or chopped apricots. Pour about a half cup of sherry into the pan and bake as for apple dumplings. Serve in bowls with the pan juices spooned over the top.

BAKE AN APPLE CRISP.

Combine 1 cup flour, 1 cup old-fashioned oats, ½ cup packed dark brown sugar, ¼ cup granulated sugar, ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, and ½ cup softened unsalted butter to make the topping. Toss 6 cups peeled sliced apples with 3 or 4 tablespoons sugar and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Spread in a 9-inch square baking pan, top with half of the crisp topping, and bake for 20 minutes at 375°F. Add the remaining crisp topping and bake until the apples are tender and the crisp is browned, another 20 to 30 minutes. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

FOR THE EASIEST APPLE DESSERT OF

ALL, set out a plate of several varieties of apples and another of plump dates, nuts, and a top-notch cheese or two—a good blue, an aged Cheddar, Dry Jack, or Parmigiano Reggiano. Sample the apples with each of the accompaniments and muse on which is the best.

Ruth Lively is the former senior editor of Kitchen Gardener magazine. ♦

Finding apples

Apples thrive in most areas of the United States, so it's usually possible to find good local ones. It's worth visiting orchards or farmstands, since grocery stores only carry ten or twelve of the hundreds of varieties grown in this country. Search online for apple growers closest to you. If the locals don't grow what you want, you can mail-order apples in season (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86).

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What can an electric “chopper” do for you?

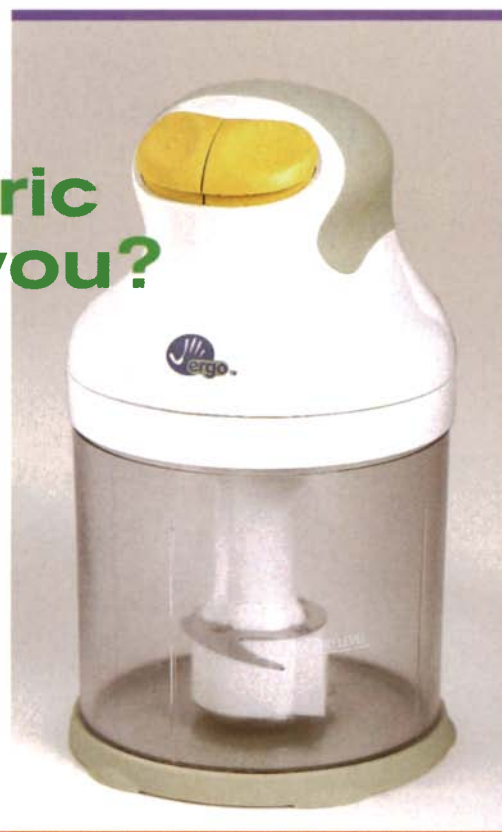
BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

In the last five years, a growing line of mini food processor appliances called “choppers” have been appearing on the shelves of housewares, cookware, and even hardware stores. I’ve always paused in front of them and then kept moving, skeptically thinking, “What could a chopper do that my knife couldn’t—other than clutter up my counter?” Having purchased nine widely available choppers (capacity no larger than 3 cups) and then methodically run them through a series of tests—from chopping and mincing to grating, grinding, blending, and puréeing—I soon found out.

The results: Most of the machines chopped and minced unevenly. The most compact machines, with 1- to 1½-cup bowls, were the least reliable. Even with small jobs, such as mincing two garlic cloves, they often did not chop or mince consistently (see “What a chopper doesn’t do well,” below). As a general category, choppers also tended to be cheaply constructed, often ear-piercingly loud, and prone to leaking liquids. Fortunately, a few models proved to be remarkably handy at some of food prep’s most nitty-gritty tasks (see “What to use a chopper for,” p. 22). For that, I’d even clear a little counterspace for one of these machines.

TOP PICK

While none of these machines chopped perfectly, five stood out as the best among the nine tested and proved that choppers can be handy kitchen companions.



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This chopper performed consistently well at mincing, grinding, and puréeing, and did so relatively quietly. But what made the Ergo our favorite was its clever, user-friendly design, including:

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What a chopper doesn’t do well

No matter the model, choppers tend to hack more than chop. Onions particularly don’t fare well, as a few pulses will tear them into a mix of shredded, minced, and chopped pieces. Then there are often the large chunks that simply ride along the spinning blade unscathed.

If you’re set on trying to use your chopper to chop, there are a few rules to follow: Cut large foods into ½- to 1-inch pieces before putting them in the bowl, and process in small amounts (for large amounts, process in batches) and with short pulses of the blade.

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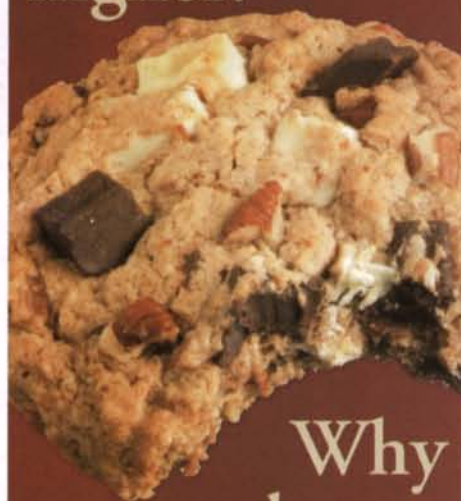


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This machine worked speedily, and at each task it outperformed almost every other model. The wide, squat bowl lets ingredients whirl around freely and catch the blades well for relatively consistent chopping and near-perfect mincing. The gawky shape is a bit of a turn-off, and the mechanism for starting the blades—locking the lid in place—is annoying. There are no pulse or on/off buttons, which takes getting used to. (This model comes with slicing and grating disks, which were not tested.)

What to use a chopper for

- ❖ Mincing garlic: From as few as one or two cloves to as many as a bulb's worth, depending on the size of the bowl. Process continuously.*
- ❖ Mincing lemon zest: Peel strips using a vegetable peeler, being careful not to include the white pith. Process continuously.*
- ❖ Making breadcrumbs: Tear the bread into 1-inch pieces. Pulse.
- ❖ Mincing ginger: Cut into 1/2-inch chunks. Process continuously.*
- ❖ Making vinaigrettes, creamy salad dressings, rubs, pastes, and sauces: See the recipe in From Our Test Kitchen, p. 78.
- ❖ Puréeing small volumes of dips or spreads.
- ❖ Chopping and mincing herbs: Pulse to coarsely chop. Process continuously* for a fine mince.
- ❖ Coarsely chopping chocolate: Pulse.
- ❖ Coarsely chopping or mincing capers or pitted olives. Pulse.
- ❖ Grinding nuts: Pulse (overprocessing can turn the nuts into a paste).

*** NOTE:** When processing continuously, stop the blade every 10 seconds to allow food to drop to the bowl's bottom. You might also have to scrape the sides with a rubber spatula once the blade stops spinning.

Runners-up in order of preference



Hamilton Beach Fresh Chop Food Chopper
model 72600

\$25
3-cup bowl
800-851-8900
www.hamiltonbeach.com

We liked the tall bowl, which seemed to let ingredients move more freely for more consistent chopping. This tall bowl works perfectly for vinaigrettes. As opposed to other models, the Hamilton Beach didn't leak, even when making a 2-cup vinaigrette. The manufacturer doesn't recommend using this machine for processing raw meat, coffee beans, chocolate squares, or whole hard spices.



KitchenAid Chef's Chopper
model KFC3100

\$50
3-cup bowl
800-541-6390
www.kitchenaid.com

This machine came the closest to an even chopping job with half an onion. It was good at coarsely chopping and mincing garlic, but somewhat uneven at making breadcrumbs and mincing lemon zest. Unfortunately, it was quick to leak when used to make a vinaigrette, and with a bean purée, the bean broth exploded through the lid's drip holes, which are designed to let you add oil or spices while the machine is running.




Cuisinart Mini-Prep Plus
model DLC-2

\$56
2 1/2-cup bowl
800-726-0190
www.cuisinart.com

The blade on this machine works in two directions. The blunt edge is intended for grinding; it made a perfect bean purée and quick, consistent minced lemon zest. The blade's sharp edge, intended for chopping, cut celery into a mix of shreds and large chunks, and whole pieces of walnut went untouched while others were ground to a powder. This machine was painfully loud, and liquids leaked through the lid seal.



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READER SERVICE NO. 65



What's the best way to crack an egg without getting the shell in whatever you're making? Also, do fresher eggs crack more easily than older ones?

—Sarah Berquist,
Scottsdale, Arizona

A Shirley O. Corriher replies: Although many cooks choose to crack eggs on a hard edge—whether on the side of a kitchen counter or on the rim of a metal bowl—a hard, flat surface actually works better because it's less likely to shatter the shells into little pieces and into the egg.

How neatly an egg cracks is also related to the firmness of its shell, which is affected not by the egg's age but by the diet of the chicken. Birds that have more calcium in their diet have stronger, more durable shells, which means the shells are harder to crack but are also less likely to shatter.

To crack an egg, hit it firmly against a flat surface (often, a couple of tentative taps will cause more shattering) and gently pull the shell open with your thumbs. If you're beating the egg, you can pass it through a sieve to make sure that there's no shell in it, if you like.

Food scientist Shirley O. Corriher, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of CookWise.

Is it all right to use the sugar substitute Splenda instead of sugar in baking recipes?

—Charles Dibicari,
Lynnfield, Massachusetts

A Rose Levy Beranbaum replies: My philosophy regarding sugar substitutes is that there's nothing like the real thing. But for specific physical intolerances such as diabetes, there can be a valid case for these substitutes.

Generally, sugar substitutes can compromise flavor and texture in baking. Of all the sugar substitutes, however, Splenda—a granular, no-calorie sugar derivative also known as sucralose—has a dramatically better flavor than most, and its texture comes close to sugar, constituting a significant culinary breakthrough.

Because Splenda's flavor is so similar to that of refined cane sugar, it's an ideal substitute in a wide range of desserts where a precise crystalline structure isn't

essential, such as pastry creams, buttercreams, mousses, cheesecake, and even biscuits for shortcake.

But while Splenda may be an acceptable substitute, it's not an identical one. Sauces and custards may not be as thick and will probably cook slightly faster. Also, in traditional layer cakes and sponge cakes where the crystalline structure is needed for aeration, Splenda falls short because it won't result in the same volume, nor will it provide the same moisture retentiveness or tenderness as regular refined cane sugar.

Rose Levy Beranbaum is the author of The Cake Bible and The Pie & Pastry Bible. She is currently working on The Bread Bible, which is to be published in the fall of 2003.

Lately I've noticed stubborn black deposits on the outside of my All-Clad pots and pans. What causes these deposits, and what's the best way to clean them?

—Nikolaus Kaubisch,
Sausalito, California

A Chris Sommer replies: The black deposits on the exteriors of your pans are most likely a buildup of foods and oils that result from boil-overs, splattering, dripping, or even the stovetop itself. Also, gas burners that don't burn cleanly can create a black film on your cookware's exterior.

To prevent these deposits from occurring, don't let liquids boil over the sides of your pots and pans, and ladle rather than pour liquids from them. Also, diligently clean your stovetop to eliminate the transfer of residues from the stove to your cookware's exterior. Finally, if the flame on your range is a yellowish hue (instead of light blue), have the burner's jets checked.

If the deposits have already occurred, it's important to remove them without much delay since the combination of heat and subsequent deposits can build up and solidify. All-Clad recommends the use of a fine-powdered cleanser like Bar Keepers Friend for general cleaning and polishing. You can scrub the exteriors of the LTD and Master Chef pots and pans with a fibrous scouring pad, like Scotch-Brite, but don't try this with stainless-steel or copper pans, as it would scratch their exteriors.

Chris Sommer is a consumer service representative for All-Clad Metalcrafters. ♦

Do you have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail to fc@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.



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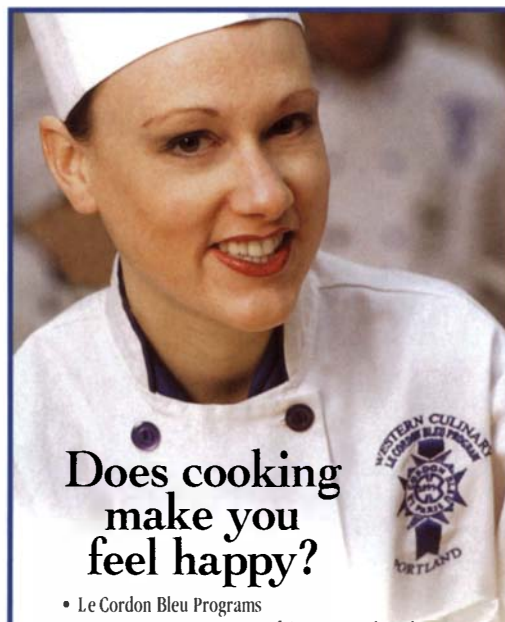
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READER SERVICE NO. 134

BY TIM GAISER

For some, myself included, Pinot Noir is the Holy Grail of wine. The mere mention conjures some of the most delicious and profound wines I've ever drunk—and can just as quickly recall some of the most disappointing ones I've ever tasted. There are many reasons for this striking split. It's mainly because Pinot Noir is a finicky grape that's really difficult to grow.

Pinot Noir is terrifically versatile with a wide range of foods. And at its best, it offers a wonderfully perfumed nose of fresh red fruits, sweet spices from oak aging, and earthy notes from the soil where the grapes were grown. Pinot Noir is luscious, velvety, and seductive with a rounded texture and soft tannins. And it has marvelous contradictions: concentrated fruit without

Pinot Noir is fruity, velvety, and versatile

heaviness, and complexity without force. Finally, a fine Pinot Noir can develop incredible complexity in the bottle with age, taking on flavors and properties that no other wine possesses.

Burgundy produces great Pinot Noir

The search for great Pinot Noir has to begin in France. Burgundy's Côte d'Or boasts some of the best possible growing conditions for Pinot, and the grape evolved there after many centuries of experimentation by the French. From Gevrey-Chambertin in the north to Volnay in the south, the ten major communes that grow Pinot Noir in the Côte d'Or offer kaleidoscopic variations of the fruity-earthy combination. Most red wines from the Côte d'Or are 100-percent Pinot Noir. Blending

across varieties isn't possible, as is done in Bordeaux and the Rhône, because the appellation rules are strict.

The greatest challenge with Burgundy is finding a good one that's affordable. Try to develop a relationship with a reliable wine merchant, especially one who specializes in Burgundy. More so than any other region, in Burgundy, the producer is the bottom line.

American Pinot Noir has made big leaps

After Burgundy, look no farther than this country for fine Pinot Noir.

California winemakers have finally come into their own with Pinot Noir. During the 1970s, hundreds of acres of Pinot were mistakenly planted in hot regions, and the wines were made with the same techniques used for thicker-skinned grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon. Many of the results were forgettable. But in the last 15 years, California winemakers have begun to solve the puzzle, using fruit from cooler climate vineyards and traditional Burgundian winemaking techniques.

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Pinot Noirs for your Thanksgiving table

Thanksgiving dinner is a great occasion for good Pinot Noir, whose bright fruit and soft tannins play well with the turkey, trimmings, and side dishes. Here are some delicious bottles—bargains, splurges, and in between. Retail prices are approximate.

counties is home to delicious Pinot Noir. Ebullient berry fruit and sweet spices are front and center in Carneros Pinot, and it's difficult to imagine a more appealing glass of wine.

The Russian River Valley has also emerged as one of the centers of the California Pinot Noir renaissance. Russian River Pinots are known for their irresistible red berry flavors and hints of tea, baking spices, and earth.

The Anderson Valley, farther north, boasts wines with similar fruit to those from the Russian River, but with more green herb notes and firmer tannins.

The Santa Cruz Mountains are where some of the oldest Pinot Noir vineyards in California are located. The wines can have Burgundy-like depth, earthiness, and complexity.

Monterey County has two diverse microclimates. One produces deliciously robust and earthy Pinots; the other, more forwardly fruity Pinots.

Santa Barbara County Pinots, especially from the Santa Maria and Santa Ynez valleys, have lush, red berry fruit with more pronounced herbal qualities.

Oregon holds tremendous promise for world-class New World Pinot Noir. The Willamette, Rogue, and Umpqua valleys are situated on the same latitude as the great vineyards of Burgundy, and the growing conditions are similar, too. Several major Burgundy houses have come over to invest in Oregon vineyards and winery operations. But despite the industry's expansion to almost 200 wineries, the results haven't always been impressive. Variable growing conditions and the difficult learning curve with

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❖	1999 Henry Estate Pinot Noir, Oregon, \$15
❖	2000 Jekel Pinot Noir, Monterey, California, \$16
❖	1999 Joseph Drouhin La Forêt, France, \$16
❖	1999 Beringer Pinot Noir, North Coast, California, \$16
❖	1999 Van Duzer Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, Oregon, \$18
❖	2000 David Bruce Central Coast Pinot Noir, California, \$20
❖	2000 Tria Pinot Noir, Carneros, California, \$22
❖	2000 Huia Vineyards Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand, \$24
❖	2000 Isabel Estate Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand, \$27

Pinot has led to uneven quality. But at their best, Oregon Pinots combine the delightful fruit qualities of California wines with Burgundian structure and complexity. The best is yet to come.

There's good Pinot "Down Under"

Though noted for crisp Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand also produces outstanding Pinot Noir. Wines from Central Otago and the Marlborough region on the South Island offer sassy red berry fruit with herbal notes and exotic spice flavors. And Pinot Noir from Australia's cooler regions—the Clare, Eden, and Yarra valleys—combine complexity with an easy-drinking style; they're excellent food partners.

Great with all meats—and yes, fish

Pinot Noir goes well with red meat, all poultry, and veal. But don't stop there. I'm a big fan of pairing Pinot with fish. Pan-seared or grilled salmon, tuna, and swordfish are delicious with light-

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❖	1999 Marimar Torres Pinot Noir, Don Miguel Vineyard, Russian River Valley, California, \$32
❖	1999 Willakenzie Estate Pinot Noir, Pierre Leon, Willamette Valley, Oregon, \$35
❖	2000 Shea Wine Cellars Estate Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon, \$49
❖	1999 Robert Chevillon Nuits-St.-Georges 1er Cru Les Roncières, France, \$60

medium-bodied Pinots. And though Pinot is a versatile crowd pleaser, I've found that the better the Pinot Noir, the simpler the food needs to be.

Pinot Noir is all about finesse and elegance; warmer temperatures will only emphasize the alcohol in the wine and any delicacy will be overshadowed. Serve Pinot at 65°F, which is a bit cooler than most red wines. If your bottle is too warm, just refrigerate it for 15 to 20 minutes. Young Pinot Noir does best simply opened and poured into the glass, but older wines might need decanting. Once ten years or older, Pinot throws off a very fine, delicate sediment that can easily be disturbed and blended back into the wine, making the texture unpleasantly gritty.

The right glass for Pinot makes a huge difference—much more so than with other wines. A glass with a bowl-type shape is best for highlighting all those delicate aromas and flavors; go for plain crystal if you can. Riedel's Vinum Pinot Noir/Burgundy glass is perfectly designed for the task and reasonably priced. Spiegelau makes a good glass, too. (For wineglass sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86.)

Master sommelier Tim Gaiser drinks Pinot Noir in San Francisco. ♦



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Why brining keeps meat so moist

BY SHIRLEY O. CORRIHER

Roasted turkey breast, sautéed pork chops, and stir-fried shrimp all tend to suffer a common fate when they're cooked even a few minutes longer than necessary: they get dry and tough. Actually, any kind of meat or fish will taste like shoe leather if it's severely overcooked, but turkey, pork, and shrimp are particularly vulnerable because they're so lean. Luckily, there's a simple solution (literally) for this problem. Soaking these types of leaner meats in a brine—a solution of salt and water—will help ensure moister, juicier results.

How a brine works

Moisture loss is inevitable when you cook any type of muscle fiber. Heat causes raw individual coiled proteins in the fibers to unwind—the technical term is denature—and then join together with one another, resulting in some shrinkage

and moisture loss. (By the way, acids, salt, and even air can have the same denaturing effect on proteins as heat.) Normally, meat loses about 30 percent of its weight during cooking. But if you soak the meat in a brine first, you can reduce this moisture loss during cooking to as little as 15 percent, according to Dr. Estes Reynolds, a brining expert at the University of Georgia.

Brining enhances juiciness in several ways. First of all, muscle fibers simply absorb liquid during the brining period. Some of this liquid gets lost during cooking, but since the meat is in a sense more juicy at the start of cooking, it ends up juicier. We can verify that brined meat and fish absorb liquid by weighing them before and after brining. Brined meats typically weigh six to eight percent more than they did before brining—clear proof of the water uptake.

Another way that brining increases juiciness is by dissolving some proteins. A mild salt solution can actually dissolve some of the proteins in muscle fibers, turning them from solid to liquid.

Of all the processes at work during brining, the most significant is salt's ability to denature proteins. The dissolved salt causes some of the proteins in muscle fibers to unwind and swell. As they unwind, the bonds that had held the protein unit together as a bundle break. Water from the brine binds directly to these proteins, but even more important, water gets trapped between these proteins when the meat cooks and the proteins bind together. Some of this would happen anyway just during cooking, but the brine unwinds more proteins and exposes more bonding sites. As long as you don't overcook the meat, which would cause protein bonds to tighten and squeeze out a lot of the trapped liquid, these natural juices will be retained.

Brining basics

How long to brine depends on the size and type of meat you've got. Larger meats like a whole turkey require much more time for the brine to do its thing. Small pieces of seafood like shrimp shouldn't sit in a brine for more than half an hour. In fact, any meat that's brined for too long will dry out and start to taste salty as the salt ends up pulling liquid out of the

Making a simple brine

Any lean, dry meat is an ideal candidate for brining; some of my favorites are shrimp, fish fillets, chicken pieces, whole chickens, and pork chops. Keep all meat and fish refrigerated during brining, rinse them well afterwards, and don't overcook them. If you need more liquid to completely submerge the meat, measure more and add it, along with the proportionate quantity of salt.

MEAT OR FISH	BRINE CONCENTRATION*	BRINING TIME
whole turkey	2 cups salt to 1 gallon water	12 to 24 hours
turkey breast	½ cup salt to 1 quart water	4 to 6 hours
pork chops	½ cup salt to 1 quart water	4 hours
large whole chicken	1 cup salt to 2 quarts water	3 to 4 hours
chicken pieces	½ cup salt to 1 quart water	2 hours (or 1 hour in a concentrated brine with 1 cup salt)
Cornish hens	1 cup salt to 2 quarts water	1 hour
shrimp (½ pound extra-large shrimp, shells on)	½ cup salt to 1 pint ice water	30 minutes
thin fish fillets	½ cup salt to 1 pint ice water	10 minutes

*using Diamond Crystal kosher salt. Cut salt amounts by ½ for table salt, or by ¼ for Morton's kosher salt.

Flavoring the brine

You can add dried herbs, such as thyme, oregano, or sage, to the brine or rub them directly on the meat for more flavor. You can also supplement or replace the water with another liquid, such as apple cider for a turkey or pork brine. Many brines include sugar, which is fine as a flavor enhancer. But according to Dr. Reynolds, sugar has no technical function when it comes to juiciness; salt is the key ingredient.

muscle fibers. (Be sure not to brine meats that have already been brined before you buy them; see p. 80 for more on this.)

It's vital to have a brine with the correct salt concentration, especially for lengthy brining times. Small, thin pieces of meat like fish fillets or shrimp can withstand a concentrated brine because they'll be immersed for only half an hour or less. But for longer brines, Dr. Reynolds suggests using 9.6 ounces of salt for every gallon of water. One scant cup of table salt per gallon of water would put you within range.

If you're using kosher salt, you'll need to use more of it by volume. This is because kosher salt has larger crystals and is bulkier than table salt. I actually prefer using kosher salt in brines because it dissolves much faster, and it comes in nice big cartons. Using Diamond Crystal kosher salt, you'll need 2 cups per gallon of liquid. Morton's kosher salt is denser, and you only need 1 1/3 to 1 1/2 cups per gallon of liquid to get the brine concentration that Dr. Reynolds recommends.

Any food-safe nonreactive container is fine for brining. For brining turkeys, I use a plastic turkey cooking bag that will completely enclose the turkey; the meat needs to be completely submerged. I put the turkey in the bag and then set the whole thing in a large bowl. I add water to the bag with a measuring cup, keeping track of how much

I've added. Then I add the correct amount of salt. If I'm brining a familiar turkey size and I know the approximate amount of salt, I just rub the salt directly on the turkey, inside and out, before adding the water. I put the bowl in the refrigerator (all meats should be refrigerated during brining) and let the meat soak for 12 to 24 hours. Discard the brine after use; for safety reasons, it should never be reused.

Whatever you're brining, remember to rinse the meat or fish well afterward to remove any surface salt. Properly brined meat shouldn't taste salty, just very juicy with good flavor. But do reduce the amount of salt called for in the recipe; that is, don't add salt until the dish is at a point where you can taste it and judge.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of CookWise. ♦



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A Moroccan classic: chicken with olives and preserved lemons

BY KATHY WAZANA

Morocco has one of the truly great cuisines of the world, blending Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and African ingredients with a generous dose of Asian spices. Once a major port of call for the international spice trade, Morocco has incorporated most of the world's spices into its cooking, either individually or in complex mixtures like *ras el hanout*, which can include more than thirty spices. To make a delicious, authentic Moroccan dish, it's more important to use the right blend of herbs and spices than to follow a strict method of cooking. Unlike French cooking, which emphasizes precise techniques and timing, Moroccan cooking methods rely mostly on the slow fusion of flavors from

Moroccan Chicken with Olives & Preserved Lemons

Serves four.

I like to serve this dish with saffron rice or with roasted sweet potatoes flavored with cumin.

1 medium onion, finely diced (to yield about 1 cup)
About 10 sprigs fresh cilantro, leaves and stems

finely chopped; more chopped leaves for garnish
Small bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley (about 8 sprigs),
leaves and stems finely chopped

1 teaspoon paprika

½ teaspoon ground ginger

¼ teaspoon turmeric

¼ teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

⅛ to ¼ teaspoon cayenne

Small pinch saffron (about 10 threads), crushed

¼ cup olive oil

3-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces

1 preserved lemon (see the recipe on p. 34), most of
the pulp removed; the rind cut into thin strips

1 cup red-brown unpitted olives, such as Gaetas

In a large bowl, mix the onion, herbs, and spices; this mixture is called a *charmoula*. In a deep skillet or a Dutch oven, heat the oil on medium-high heat. Cook the chicken in two batches until browned on all sides, about 3 minutes per side, transferring the pieces to the bowl with the *charmoula* as they're done. Pour off and discard most of the oil in the pan, leaving a film on the bottom. Toss the chicken to coat it with the *charmoula*. Pour ¼ cup water into the pan over medium heat and scrape up any browned bits to help them dissolve. Remove the pan from the heat, add the chicken so it's in a single layer (a little overlap is fine). Scrape out the bowl of *charmoula*, adding the

contents to the pan. Add ¾ cup water and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and add the preserved lemon strips and olives to the sauce. Cover and simmer, turning the chicken occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through and very tender and the onion and herbs have melted into the sauce, 10 to 15 minutes. If it's not yet saucy but the liquid is evaporating, add more water and continue cooking for another 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a platter. Simmer the sauce uncovered so it has some body, about 3 minutes. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and sprinkle with chopped cilantro leaves.

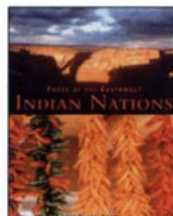


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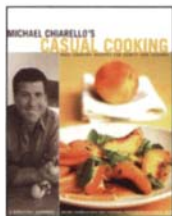
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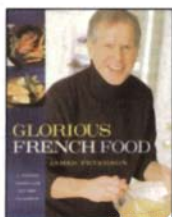
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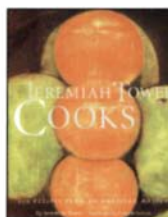
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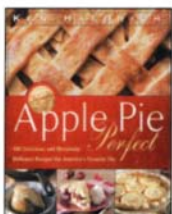
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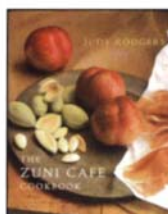
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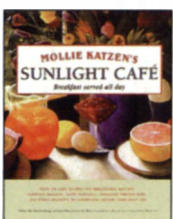
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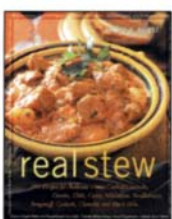
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ingredients left to simmer slowly and gently.

In my travels to Morocco, I often visit my friends, the Boutounes family, in Casablanca. In what has become a ritual, I'm greeted with a glass of fragrant tea made with green tea leaves and fresh spearmint. Afterward, we sit down to a traditional Moroccan dinner. Appetizers are a variety of raw and cooked vegetable salads served with freshly baked bread, called *k'sra*. Then come bowls of *harira*—a hearty vegetable, chickpea, and lentil soup. The soup is a meal in itself, but I know there's more to come. The aromas wafting out of the kitchen announce a quintessentially Moroccan dish:

chicken with olives and preserved lemons.

This marvelous combination of chicken, olives, and preserved lemons has inspired countless recipes, each with its own special nuance. In her essential book, *Couscous & Other Good Food from Morocco*, Paula Wolfert gives four distinct recipes for the dish. Techniques vary. My friend Mrs. Boutounes uses the traditional method of slow-cooking everything together and then flashing the chicken under the broiler for a few minutes to brown it before serving, while my family, influenced by years of living in France, always browns the chicken first.

One essential component in any version of this dish is

a spice and herb mixture, called a *charmoula*, which provides a critical foundation of flavor. In the recipe on p. 32, the *charmoula* includes paprika, ginger, turmeric, cumin, cayenne, and saffron, plus flat-leaf parsley, cilantro, and onion.

I think you'll find that this recipe is a good starting point for discovering this signature Moroccan dish. (If you can't wait a month for the preserved lemons to cure, you can buy them; see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86.) Once you follow the recipe as written, feel free to adapt it to your own taste—that's the Moroccan way.

Kathy Wazana, a native Moroccan, is a writer and cooking teacher in Toronto. ♦

Preserved lemons— a unique Moroccan flavor

More than any other ingredient, preserved lemons set Moroccan cooking apart from the other cuisines of North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Preserved lemons have a taste and texture that cannot be replicated: sour, salty and almost sweet at the same time. As a result of the long curing time (one month), the rind becomes soft and edible; it loses its bitterness and acquires a kind of pungency that imparts the distinctive, delicious taste of Morocco to any dish. Much of the pulp disintegrates into the brine.

To use, rinse the lemons briefly to remove excess salt. You can use both the pulp and rind, or the rind alone, cutting it into quarters, strips, or small pieces.

Recipe ideas

- ❖ Add chopped preserved lemons and oil-cured black olives to a Mediterranean salad of chopped tomatoes, green peppers, onions, cucumbers, and cilantro.
- ❖ Add quartered or sliced preserved lemons to braised chicken or lamb dishes halfway through cooking, where they'll infuse the meat with their distinctive aroma.
- ❖ Flavor rice by adding some coarsely chopped preserved lemon to the cooking water. For saffron rice, add a pinch of saffron threads at the same time.

Preserved Lemons

Yields six to eight preserved lemons.

¼ to ⅓ cup coarse sea salt or kosher salt
6 to 8 lemons (organic, if possible), well washed

Sterilize a 1-quart mason jar or run it through the dishwasher. Coat the bottom of the jar with a thin layer of salt.

Cut each lemon lengthwise into quarters to within about ½ inch of the base, keeping it attached at the stem end.

Holding a lemon over a bowl, press a generous amount of salt into the exposed flesh. Close up the lemon and roll it in more salt to coat the skin. Put the salted lemon in the jar and continue with the remaining lemons, pushing each lemon down tightly to release some of the juice and fill all the space. Pack the jar to within ¼ inch of the top. If the released juice doesn't cover the fruit, top it off with more squeezed lemon juice before closing the jar.

Keep the jar in a cabinet or on a shelf for four weeks, turning the jar every day. To use, rinse the amount of lemon needed under water. Store the opened jar in the refrigerator or another cool place. The lemons will keep for at least six months as long as they're always completely covered with juice—the acidity and salinity prevent bacterial growth. If the juice level falls too low, top it up with more fresh lemon juice. Remove the lemons from the jar with a clean wooden spoon (not your fingers) to avoid introducing any impurities from your hands.



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An inviting, hard-working kitchen



A bulletin board doubles as a cabinet door, concealing shelves just deep enough for wineglasses.

BY AMY ALBERT

Anne Otterson, a passionate home cook from La Jolla, California, had convenience at the top of her list when she designed her friendly, functional kitchen. "Everything is right where I need it," she says. "I can even pull open drawers with my foot when I'm at the stove, if I have to."

She probably doesn't have to. Besides being an accomplished cook, Anne is an architecture enthusiast with a keen eye for scale, plan, and line. A set-in knife block is directly adjacent to the workspace she uses most often. A pot rack is directly above the work island and appropriately proportioned. Clever details abound.

And the kitchen is filled with light; it's an inviting place to be, with a back door that leads directly to Anne's herb garden. "I wanted to make sure that the passageways in and out of the kitchen were clear," she adds, "and that the windows would make the most of the outdoors."

Amy Albert is Fine Cooking's senior editor. ♦



Vertical undercounter dividers provide a neat home for muffin tins, tart pans, and baking sheets.



Refrigerator and freezer stand side by side, just an arm's reach from the countertop.



Cutaway shelves and good lighting ensure that pantry items are easy to see and to reach.



This mixer has a permanent abode: a shelf that swings down, to be easily tucked away in its own cabinet when not in use.



A cramped space became useful storage when Anne turned a china closet into a wine cellar.

Do you have a good-looking, well-functioning kitchen with ingenious, practical details that make cooking more efficient and more fun? Send a description and photos to Kitchen Detail, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or send e-mail to fc@taunton.com.

A drizzle goes a long way

After tasting Frescobaldi Laudemio extra-virgin olive oil, we've decided that the oil is worth its price. Produced by a consortium of some of Italy's finest olive growers, this oil is marked by a slightly peppery sharpness and a balanced fruity quality. Drizzle it over a light pasta, crusty bread, or oven-roasted vegetables. A 16.9-ounce bottle is \$36.40 at www.cybercucina.com; 800-796-0116.



Peel quick julienne strips

Drag the Kuhn Rikon julienne peeler along the length of a carrot and, instead of shavings, the sharp-toothed peeler forms long, thin julienne strips. Like a mandoline, this peeler replicates the time-consuming work of a knife, but it's less bulky. Use the peeler to slice cucumbers into thin strips and toss them with soy sauce and sesame seeds for a quick Asian salad. Available at Chef's Catalog (800-884-2433) for \$12.99.

A shapely pot whisk reaches into corners

The noselike profile of the Profi Plus pot whisk lets you reach pan sides and corners, places that a balloon or sauce whisk can't always get to. We especially like this whisk for pan sauces and for thickened custards like crème anglaise, where its sturdy wires can incorporate the thickening bits of custard that gather in corners and around the edges. A 12-inch whisk is \$8 at www.shophomestyle.com; 800-896-7341.



Fresh-tasting tuna out of the can



We were pleasantly taken aback by the intense flavor of the Pacific albacore from Catch of the Sea. The small company's owners, Mark and Cynthia Schneider, catch tuna individually on a hook and line and then pack them in natural juices, oil, and sea salt. They also smoke some of the catch over alder wood, which complements the fish's full flavor. Pair the tuna with green beans, ripe cherry tomatoes, and greens for a bright Niçoise salad. A case of six 7¾-ounce cans of premium tuna is \$28.50 (503-662-3575; www.catchofthesea.com).



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WINNING TIP

Heat your serving bowl with pasta water

Whenever I drain pasta, I put my large pasta serving bowl in the sink, under the colander. The hot water from the pot of cooked pasta warms the bowl while I season the pasta in the colander. After draining the bowl, which is now very warm, I put the pasta in it, toss to distribute the seasonings, and bring the bowl to the table. The pasta stays nice and hot throughout the meal.

—Carla Cimarosti,
Bacliff, Texas

Add a little water to a dry sauté or stir-fry

When I'm stir-frying or sautéing something in its juices, in oil, or in its own marinade, the liquid or fat will often evaporate or be absorbed by the food. Instead of adding more oil or butter to the pan, I just add a tablespoon or two of water. This won't affect the taste and will add moisture to the food so it will finish cooking properly. Any residual moisture will evaporate in the end.

—Jo-Anne McArthur,
Toronto, Ontario

Homemade walnut-flavored oil

When I moved to the U.S. from France, one of the ingredients I missed most dearly was walnut oil. (Now, you can buy French walnut oil in specialty shops, but it's often rancid, or on the verge of becoming so, once it's opened). Finally I came up with a flavorful, homemade version of walnut oil. Lightly toast some

walnut meats and then add a flavorless vegetable oil like safflower or soybean oil and heat them gently together for a few minutes. Grind the mixture in a blender and filter the resulting mash through a sieve lined with several layers of clean cheesecloth that's been rinsed and squeezed dry. Use a ladle to press as much of the oil out as you can, and then gather up the cheesecloth and squeeze until no more oil drips out. The resulting walnut-flavored oil can be stored in the refrigerator for up to one month.

—Madeleine Kamman,
Barre, Vermont

Clean the garlic press with a sink spray nozzle

I have a separate spray nozzle on my sink (the kind with a plastic or metal hose) that's terrific for cleaning out the garlic bits wedged tightly in the little holes of my garlic press. I hold the garlic press open and aim the sprayer

directly at the holes in the press plate. The tiny, powerful jets of water quickly blast the stubborn garlic right out of the press.

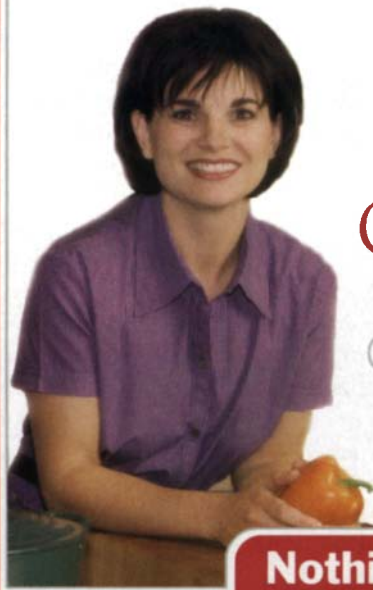
—Josie Grable,
New York, New York

Rinsing canned beans quickly

I use canned beans often, and one of the problems I've had is removing and rinsing the beans without damaging them. It seemed that the process of pouring the beans into a colander and rinsing them with water often left quite a few beans broken in half or with split skins. Then I tried this technique. I put the can of beans into a clean, empty sink, then I used a can opener to punch three holes into the bottom of the can, turned the can over and opened its top. Next, I held the full can of beans under the faucet and ran cool water gently through it until the liquid draining from the bottom was clear. You can pour the

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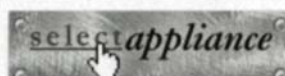
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beans from the can directly into whatever dish you're preparing. The result is nicely rinsed, undamaged beans, and a clean colander still in your cupboard.

—Clark Smith,
Saratoga, California

Manicotti "popsicles" speed cooking time

My family loves manicotti so I make it often. But trying to stuff soft, creamy ricotta into wet, slippery manicotti noodles isn't much fun. I've found an easier way; I remove the manicotti noodles from the grooved, plastic tray that they came in and set the noodles aside. Then I use the plastic tray as a mold, filling each groove with ricotta and shaping the fillings to approximate the size and shape of the noodles. I then put the plastic tray in the freezer. Once the filling "popsicles" are ready, I stuff them into the cooked manicotti noodles and bake them slightly longer to compensate for the frozen filling. Now I often prepare several different fillings and freeze these "popsicles" for when the craving for manicotti arises.

—Evelyn Sluis,
Gibsons, British Columbia

Easy-to-open, airtight jar lids

Lately, I've been making batches of vanilla extract that I store in glass jars. I need to check the progress of the flavor occasionally, but the lids can be difficult to open, especially if sugar or other ingredients create a sticky seal. I've found that if I place a small plastic sandwich bag between the lid and the jar rim, I can seal it tight yet when I want to open the jar, the two layers of the plastic bag slide against each other and make the lid easy to remove.

—Mina Yamashita,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Hang pans with their lids

I hang much of my cookware on a pot rack mounted on my kitchen ceiling. Many people don't realize that the lids of most high end cookware companies (such as All-Clad, Calphalon, Sitram, etc.) can be inverted and slid onto the long handles of their pans prior to hanging—thus saving space. Now you won't have to hunt for that elusive lid for the pan you're using.

—Adam Eisner,
Hadley, Massachusetts

Salt helps a mortar and pestle do its job

I've always had a hard time getting dried herbs and spices—and especially red chile flakes—to crush well in a mortar and pestle. I've since found that adding some salt or sugar to the mortar really facilitates the grinding of the herb or spice.

—Janet deCarteret,
Bellevue, Washington

No-peel mango

When I need some ripe mango flesh for a sauce or purée, or just to eat out of hand, I don't bother to peel the mango. Using a sharp knife I cut the two broad sides of the mango from the pit and, holding a mango half in the palm of my hand, I scoop out the flesh one spoonful at a time. This technique can also be used

on other soft, ripe fruits and vegetables, such as kiwis and avocados.

—Inigo Chacon,
Key West, Florida

Peeling onions easily

I hate peeling onions even more than I hate chopping them. I've added one quick and easy step to the standard onion dicing procedure to make peeling easier. After cutting off the stem end and the "beard" (leaving the root end intact, of course) and cutting the onion in two (vertically, through the stem and root ends), I make a shallow cut through the peel and into the top layer or two of onion. The cut bisects each half of the onion. It's much easier to remove the onion skin in quarters than trying to tear it off a whole half onion.

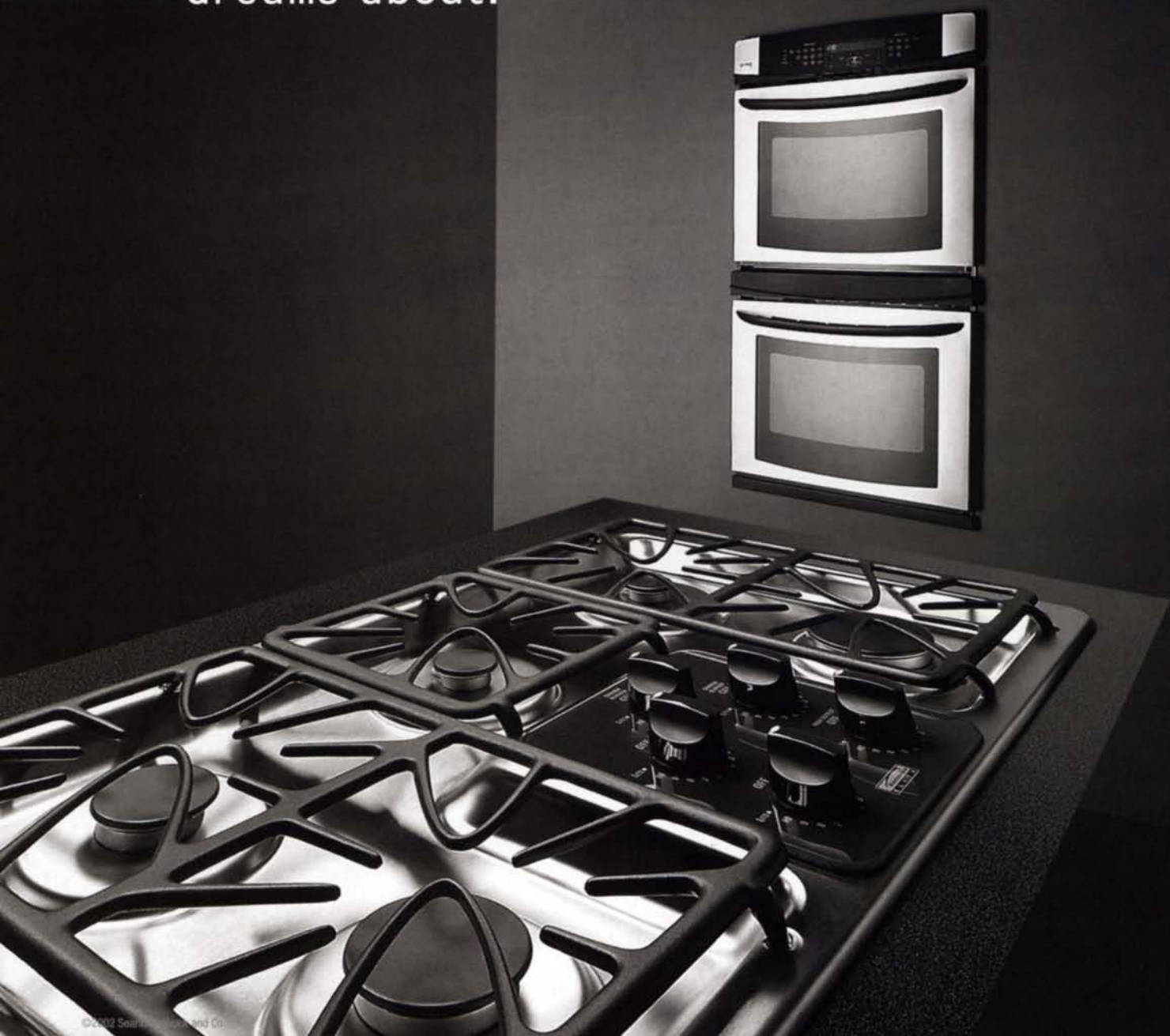
—Jonathan Burkinshaw,
Toronto, Ontario

Defatting a braising liquid

When braising meat for dishes such as those from the braising article in *Fine Cooking* #49 (p. 56), I use the following technique to defat the liquid. Set a tall, tempered glass jar, such as a canning jar, in a deep ice water bath. (It's important that the glass is tempered; the extreme temperature change would break regular glass.) Remove the meat from the pan and pour the liquid into the glass. Within minutes, the fat will begin to separate so that most of it can easily be removed. The tall glass jar and deep ice bath ensure that a large surface area of the liquid gets exposed to the cold water, and the glass lets you see when the fat separates. To remove even more of the fat, refrigerate the jar until the remaining fat congeals and can be skimmed off.

—Julie Ward,
Menlo Park, California ♦

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Serves eight

**Assorted olives,
herbed goat cheese
with crostini,
marinated artichokes**

**Butter-Rubbed,
Cider-Glazed
Roast Turkey**

**Dressing with
Apples, Bacon,
& Caramelized
Onions**

**Purée of
Yukon Gold Potatoes
with Parmesan**

**Browned Brussels
Sprouts with
Hazelnuts & Lemon**

**Cranberry-Orange
Relish with Ginger**

**Pumpkin & Ginger
Pound Cake with
Vanilla Ice Cream**

For a selection of Pinot
Noirs to match this menu,
see *Enjoying Wine*, p. 26.

A Feast in Four Hours

Most Thanksgivings, you'll find me planning weeks in advance: it's by far my favorite holiday. But last year I was so busy that Thanksgiving became a hurried affair. I had remembered to order a turkey, but the big day crept up so quickly that I had only the day before to shop, and about four hours on Thanksgiving Day to cook. Amazingly, I pulled it off—turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, cranberry relish, and vegetables—the works.

Dinner was delicious, and I learned something: A full-fledged Thanksgiving doesn't require a huge amount of planning and cooking. The time crunch actually turned out to be an enjoyable challenge—a sort of marathon, with a bit of sweat at the brow but a great showing at the finish line. So get ready to impress everyone with a beautiful meal that takes only four hours to make.

The timetable on p. 46 will help you strategize, but here are more pointers so your blitz Thanksgiving comes off without a hitch.

Think ahead about dessert. You can bake the pound cake on p. 49 a few weeks before, or assign the recipe to a friend. For easy appetizers, buy good cheese, olives, and other antipasto items from the grocery store. The night before, set the table and pull out serving platters, utensils, and glasses. Hand over tasks like peeling potatoes and arranging hors d'oeuvres to family and friends.

As soon as the turkey is in the oven, start chopping. Measure the ingredients for the rest of the recipes and put them in separate bowls. I set the measured ingredients for each dish on a rimmed baking sheet and stick the recipe on top; when it's time to get cooking, everything is at hand.

Finally, don't forget to have fun as you prepare this delicious meal. And let yourself revel in the triumph of having made a fabulous turkey dinner that takes just a bit longer to make than the average Thanksgiving Day football game.

Here's how to
pull off a flawless
dinner with all the
trimmings while
the turkey roasts

BY DIANE MORGAN





For appealing and hassle-free appetizers, assemble top-quality olives, cheeses, and other antipasto items from a grocery or specialty store.

Butter-Rubbed, Cider-Glazed Roast Turkey

Serves eight with ample seconds and leftovers; yields about 2 cups gravy.

Basting with cider during the last hour of roasting creates a sweet and beautiful bronze-glazed finish.

- 1 turkey (about 14 pounds), preferably fresh, completely thawed if frozen**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 medium yellow onions, quartered**
- 6 cloves garlic**
- 2 Golden Delicious apples (unpeeled), cored and quartered**
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme**
- 6 leaves fresh sage**
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted**
- 3 cups apple cider**
- 2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth; more if needed**
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour**

Position a rack on the lowest level in the oven that will let you fit the turkey and still have room to bake the dressing. Heat the oven to 350°F. Have ready a large roasting pan with a roasting rack, preferably V-shaped, set in the pan.

Ready, set, go: here's your menu strategy

2 weeks ahead

- ❖ Order a fresh turkey.
- ❖ Make and freeze the cake (or assign the recipe to a guest).

1 or 2 days ahead

- ❖ Make a grocery list and shop.
- ❖ Set the table.
- ❖ Pull out serving platters and utensils.
- ❖ If the turkey has been frozen, be sure it's thawed.

4 hours ahead

- ❖ Pull the turkey out of the refrigerator and heat the oven.
- ❖ Prepare the turkey.
- ❖ If the cake has been frozen, unwrap it and let it thaw.

3½ hours ahead

- ❖ Put the turkey in the oven.
- ❖ Assemble the dressing (but leave out the eggs and liquid until the last minute).
- ❖ Make the cranberry relish.
- ❖ Peel the potatoes.

2 hours ahead

- ❖ Make the potato purée; keep warm over a warm water bath.
- ❖ Toast the hazelnuts and quarter the Brussels sprouts.

1 hour ahead

- ❖ Finish assembling the dressing and put it in to bake.
- ❖ Arrange the appetizers.



"This is totally do-able, even if your schedule is tight," says Diane Morgan.



Make your dessert ahead of time and freeze it.



Organize your recipes and ingredients.



Keep puréed potatoes warm over a hot water bath.

Prepare the turkey: Remove the bag of giblets from the main and neck cavities of the bird and discard the liver. Set aside the neck, tail, gizzard, and heart. Rinse the turkey well and pat it dry with paper towels.

Season the chest cavity with some of the salt and a few grinds of pepper. Put 4 of the onion quarters, the garlic, the apples, 4 of the thyme sprigs, and 4 of the sage leaves in the chest cavity. Secure the legs under the flap of tail skin or tie them together. Bend the wingtips back behind the turkey, securing any loose neck skin underneath the wingtips.

Roast the turkey: Brush the turkey with the butter. Season the turkey with the rest of the salt and more pepper. Put the turkey, breast side down, on the roasting rack. Scatter the remaining onion quarters and herbs in the roasting pan. Add the neck, tail, gizzard, and heart to the pan, along with 1½ cups of the apple cider and 1 cup of the broth (you'll use the remaining cider for basting and the remaining chicken broth for the gravy). Roast for 30 minutes. Baste the turkey with the pan juices, and roast another 30 minutes.

Remove the turkey from the oven. Using oven mitts covered with aluminum foil, or

wads of paper towels, turn the turkey breast side up. (The turkey won't be very hot at this point.) Baste with the pan juices, return the turkey to the oven with the breast facing the opposite direction from the way it was (you will have flipped and rotated it). Roast for another 1 hour, basting occasionally.

After the turkey has roasted for 2 hours total, begin basting with the remaining apple



cider every 30 minutes, rotating the position of the pan to brown the bird evenly. The turkey is done when an instant-read thermometer registers 170°F when inserted into the thickest part of the thigh. (When the internal temperature of a thigh is 155° to 160°F, the turkey is about 30 minutes away from being done; a 14-pound unstuffed turkey takes about 3 hours.)

When the turkey is done, tilt it over the roasting pan to let the juices in the main cavity run into the pan (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 76, for a tool to help you do this). Transfer the turkey to a carving board or serving platter and tent it loosely with foil. Let it rest for 20 to 30 minutes before carving.

While the turkey rests, make the gravy:

Discard the solids in the roasting pan and skim off as much fat as possible with a large spoon (tilting the pan makes this easier). Set the roasting pan over medium-high heat and bring the juices to a simmer. Using a wooden spoon, scrape and loosen any browned bits sticking to the bottom and sides of the pan. In a measuring cup, mix the flour with the remaining 1 cup chicken broth. Add the flour mixture to the pan and whisk until thickened, about 3 minutes. If the gravy gets too thick, thin it with more chicken broth until it reaches the consistency you like. Continue cooking and stirring for another 5 minutes to eliminate any raw flour flavor. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Strain into a gravy boat or a small bowl; keep warm until ready to serve.

(More recipes follow)

Turkey talk

If you're like most people, you only cook a bird this big once a year. So to be sure you get it right, here are some tips and reminders.

- ❖ If you have time the night before, brine the turkey. I haven't included brining in this recipe because of the extra time required—and this turkey tastes great without it. But brining is a great way to add flavor. (For more on brining, see Food Science, p. 30.)
- ❖ For even roasting and browning, rotate the turkey. I've given specific recipe instructions for when to do it. Even if you know your oven doesn't have hot spots, rotating is good insurance against uneven cooking.
- ❖ Remember that roasting time will vary depending on the turkey's size. A 14-pound turkey is the ideal size for this menu's timetable since it will cook in about 3 hours at 350°F, and it will yield more than enough meat for eight people. If you want to cook a bigger turkey, add about 15 minutes per pound to your mental timetable, but always use an instant-read thermometer to check for doneness.
- ❖ If the turkey is browning too fast, tent it with foil. The cider you'll use for basting contains a bit of natural sugar, and this can accelerate browning. So as you baste, be sure to keep watch.
- ❖ After you pull the turkey out of the oven, tent it with foil and let it rest. This gives the juices time to redistribute throughout the bird, and it buys you time to make the gravy and finish the side dishes.

For more turkey information, see "online extras" at www.finecooking.com

45 to 30 minutes before serving

- ❖ Pull the turkey out of the oven and tent it with foil to keep it warm.
- ❖ Make the gravy; keep warm.
- ❖ Cook the Brussels sprouts; keep warm.
- ❖ Put out appetizers as guests arrive.



Dressing with Apples, Bacon & Caramelized Onions

Serves eight.

A turkey roasts more evenly unstuffed, so I like to cook the stuffing—technically now a dressing—separately. If you're assembling this ahead, wait until just before baking to add the eggs and chicken broth. A metal baking pan tends to make this dressing cook more quickly.

Butter for the pan

- 1 loaf (15 to 16 ounces) day-old rustic-style white bread**
- 8 ounces sliced bacon, cut into 1-inch squares**
- 1 large onion, cut into a ½-inch dice (about 1½ cups)**
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar**
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch dice (about 2½ cups)**
- 3 large ribs celery, chopped (about 1½ cups)**
- ⅔ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, lightly chopped**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- 3½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**

Butter a 9x13-inch baking pan. Cut the bread into 1-inch cubes and spread them on a baking sheet to dry at room temperature while you prepare the other ingredients.

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp, about 15 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a plate lined with paper towels. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of fat from the skillet; reserve the extra. Put the onion in the pan and sauté over medium-high heat until soft and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle the

sugar over the onion and sauté, stirring constantly to prevent sticking or burning, until the onion turns deep golden and the edges caramelize, 3 to 5 minutes. Scrape the onion into a large mixing bowl.

Return the pan to medium heat and add 2 tablespoons of the reserved bacon fat. Add the apples and celery. Sauté until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the parsley, thyme, sage, ½ teaspoon of the salt, and a few grinds of pepper; sauté another 1 minute. Scrape the contents of the pan into the bowl with the onion.

When you're ready to bake the stuffing, add the bread cubes and bacon to the bowl of sautéed vegetables and toss. Add the beaten eggs, broth, the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and a few more grinds of pepper; mix well. Transfer to the prepared baking pan.

Half an hour before the turkey is done (an instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh should read 155° to 160°F), put the stuffing in the oven next to the turkey and bake uncovered at 350°F until the top is light and crusty, about 1 hour.



Purée of Yukon Gold Potatoes with Parmesan

Serves eight, with leftovers.

I love the buttery texture and golden hue of Yukon Gold potatoes, and the Parmigiano here makes them special.

- 8 large Yukon Gold potatoes (3½ to 4 pounds total), peeled, quartered, and rinsed**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt; more to taste**
- 1½ cups milk; more if needed**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- ½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature**
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste**

Put the quartered potatoes in a large saucepan with enough cold water to cover. Partially cover the pot and bring to a boil.

Uncover, add the salt, and reduce the heat so the water boils gently. Cook until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, 10 to 12 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the milk and cream on the stovetop or in a microwave until hot but not boiling. Drain the potatoes and return to the warm pan over low heat for 1 minute, shaking the pan to dry the potatoes thoroughly. Use a potato masher, a ricer, or a food mill to mash the potatoes. Blend the butter and Parmigiano into the potatoes. Gradually add the milk mixture until the purée is as soft and moist as you like. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately or keep warm in the top of a double boiler (or in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water).



Cranberry-Orange Relish with Ginger

Yields 3 cups; serves eight.

This ginger-tinged relish is tart—a perfect complement to the holiday bird. You can make it the day ahead, if you like.

- 1 package (12 ounces) fresh cranberries, picked over and stemmed**
- 1 small navel orange, including the peel, cut into eighths**
- A generous ⅓ cup roughly chopped crystallized ginger**
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar**
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

In a food processor, combine the cranberries, orange, crystallized ginger, sugar, and salt. Process until coarsely ground, stopping once or twice to scrape down the sides of the bowl. Transfer to a serving bowl, cover, and refrigerate until ready to serve.



Browned Brussels Sprouts with Hazelnuts & Lemon

Yields 4 cups; serves eight.

This nutty, buttery take on Brussels sprouts is sure to win over even those who say they don't like them.

½ cup hazelnuts
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 pounds fresh Brussels sprouts, trimmed and quartered
Kosher salt
2 to 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Freshly ground black pepper

Toast the nuts on a baking sheet in a 350°F oven, stirring occasionally, until very fragrant and the skins are deep brown and cracked, about 15 minutes. Wrap the nuts in a clean dishtowel (one you don't mind staining); let steam for at least 5 minutes. Vigorously rub the nuts against one another in the towel to scrape off the skins (you won't get them all; aim for about half). Chop the nuts coarsely.

Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the oil and butter. As soon as the butter melts, add the Brussels sprouts and spread evenly around the pan. Sprinkle with salt and cook without disturbing until browned on the first side, about 3 minutes. Continue to cook, stirring the sprouts occasionally, until they're well browned all over, another 5 to 8 minutes. Add ¼ cup water, cover partially, and cook until tender, another 4 to 5 minutes (if the water evaporates completely during cooking, add more, 2 tablespoons at a time). Don't overcook; the sprouts shouldn't be mushy. Add the nuts. Season to taste with the lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Serve immediately or keep warm for up to 20 minutes.

Diane Morgan is the author of The Thanksgiving Table: Recipes & Ideas to Create Your Own Holiday Tradition. ♦

Make dessert ahead

This delicious twist on pumpkin pie will keep for two days at room temperature if wrapped tightly. You can also make it up to three weeks ahead: Wrap it first in plastic, then in foil, and freeze it; pull it out of the freezer four hours before serving.



Pumpkin & Ginger Pound Cake

Serves eight, with ample leftovers.

8 ounces (1 cup) unsalted butter, completely softened at room temperature; more for the pan
9½ ounces (2½ cups) cake flour; more for the pan
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon table salt
1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
4 large eggs, at room temperature
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 cups packed light brown sugar
1 cup unsweetened pumpkin purée
¼ cup vegetable oil
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
1 to 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar for dusting
1 quart vanilla ice cream (optional)

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter and flour a 10-inch tube pan or 12-cup bundt pan, preferably nonstick. Tap out any excess flour.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, ground ginger, nutmeg, and cloves; set aside. Separate the eggs, putting the yolks in a small bowl and the whites in a large mixing bowl.

Using a hand mixer or a stand mixer with the whisk attachment, cream the butter on medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. With the mixer on low speed, gradually add the vanilla and the brown sugar, about ½ cup at a time. When all the brown sugar has been added, stop the mixer, scrape down the sides, and cream the mixture on medium

speed until light and fluffy, about 3 to 4 minutes.

Use a fork to lightly beat the egg yolks; then, with the mixer on low speed, add them slowly to the butter-sugar mixture. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, increase the speed to medium, and beat for 1 minute. On low speed, add the pumpkin purée, oil, and fresh ginger. Beat until smooth.

Using a rubber spatula, stir in one-third of the flour mixture, and continue stirring just until the flour disappears (don't beat or overmix). Repeat, adding the remaining flour mixture in two more passes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and set it aside.

Add a pinch of salt to the egg whites and beat with an electric mixer just until they hold soft peaks. Gently but thoroughly fold them into the batter. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan, spreading it evenly with a rubber spatula. Bake until the cake springs back when touched with a fingertip and a pick inserted into the center of the cake comes out mostly clean with a few moist crumbs clinging to it, 45 to 50 minutes. Set the pan on a rack to cool for 10 minutes. Carefully run a paring knife around the inside edge of the pan. Invert the cake onto the cooling rack and gently remove the pan. Let cool completely. (If you're making the cake ahead, wrap it now). Just before serving, use a fine sieve to sift the confectioners' sugar over the cake. Cut into ¾-inch slices and serve with a scoop of ice cream, if you like.

Dressing Up Pork Loin

Whether it's boneless and butterflied or served as a towering rack, this versatile cut picks up bold flavors from stuffings, herb crusts, and savory sauces

BY ANNE WILLAN

We'll have a nice bit o' pork loin," our country cook, Emily, used to say—and I knew a treat was in store. Her roast pork was a marvel, with a crisp, browned crust and wonderfully juicy white meat within. She accompanied the thickened brown gravy with quantities of oven-roasted potatoes as well as seasonal vegetables like mashed rutabaga, Brussels sprouts, or steamed leeks. Applesauce was simmered from windfall apples and flavored with a couple of cloves. Need I say that I was born and raised British?

My culinary studies abroad taught me that other cuisines had equally vibrant approaches to pork loin. The French top it with an herbed breadcrumb crust, or add prunes, dried apricots, almonds, spices, and always a generous glass of wine. Italian cooks like to butterfly pork loin and sandwich it with chopped herbs and garlic

before roasting. Sometimes they add milk, which cooks down to a fragrant, golden essence reminiscent in color, though not in taste, of a *caffè latte*.

Cook the loin on the bone or off

The finest cut of pork for roasting is the loin, which stretches along the backbone from the shoulder and provides a continuous strip of tender, juicy meat. Sometimes the loin is left on the bone. It's then called a rack of pork, and it looks like seven or eight pork chops strung together.

There are advantages to both boneless and bone-in pork loin. Boneless pork loin is easy to carve with no waste, but it also dries out easily, particularly now that pigs have been bred to yield lean meat. Conversely, leaving the bones in keeps the meat moist and flavorful and prevents the meat from shrinking. The rack also makes for a grand presentation. *(Continued on p. 52)*



Pork with garlic and rosemary



...with an herb-mustard crust



...with prunes and dried apricots



Rack of Pork with an Herb-Mustard Crust

Serves six.

Rack of pork—the loin including the rib bones—makes an excellent party roast when topped with a savory breadcrumb mixture that browns and crisps. Have your butcher “french” or scrape the bones clean. My favorite accompaniment is baby potatoes; see the recipe at right.

- 1 six-rib bone-in pork loin**
(about 4 pounds)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 2 to 3 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 shallots, chopped (about ½ cup)**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon ground paprika**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- ¾ cup packed fresh coarse breadcrumbs (about 2 ounces)**
- 2 to 3 tablespoons Dijon-style honey mustard**
- 1 cup medium-dry white wine**
- 1½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**
- Potatoes for roasting; see the recipe at right (optional)**

Heat the oven to 425°F. Trim any excess fat from the pork but leave on an even layer of fat to moisten the meat during cooking. Sprinkle the pork with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a small flameproof roasting pan or a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat and brown the fat-covered surface of the pork until it turns a deep golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Turn the roast rib side down and roast in the oven, basting occasionally, for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the topping: In a 10-inch skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and sauté the garlic and shallots until soft and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the cumin and paprika; continue cooking for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and stir in the parsley and breadcrumbs. Season with salt and pepper.

After the pork has roasted for 30 minutes, brush the surface with the mustard and spread with the breadcrumb topping, pressing so it adheres. Turn the oven down to 375°F

and put the potatoes (see the recipe at right) in the oven beside the pork. Continue roasting the pork until a meat thermometer inserted in the center registers 145°F, about another 30 minutes. Transfer the meat to a carving board or platter and cover loosely with foil. If the potatoes are done, turn off the oven and leave them in until ready to serve. If they're not fully cooked, continue roasting them while the pork rests and you prepare the gravy.

To make the gravy, put the roasting pan on the stovetop over high heat, add the wine, and boil, stirring to dissolve the pan juices, until the wine is reduced almost to a glaze. Add the broth and simmer until well flavored, 2 minutes or longer if necessary. Strain the gravy into a small pan, reheat it, and taste for seasonings.

To serve, pile the potatoes around the pork and carve the pork at the table, cutting down vertically between the rib bones to form chops. Pass the gravy separately.



These potatoes get roasted in the oven right alongside the meat.

Oven-Roasted Potatoes

For six people, scrub (but don't peel) 2½ pounds baby potatoes. Mix the potatoes in a roasting pan with ¼ cup olive oil, 1 teaspoon kosher salt, and ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Roast in a 375°F oven, stirring from time to time, until lightly browned and tender when pierced with a skewer, 30 to 40 minutes.

Butterfly a boned pork loin

Butterflying yields a rectangle of meat of fairly even thickness, good for grilling flat, or for spreading with seasonings or a stuffing and then rolling as a roast. Use a medium to large chef's knife to do the slicing.



Make a horizontal slit in the loin, cutting almost through to the other side. Open the meat flat, like a book, so it's an even thickness.



Use a spoon to spread the filling over the meat.



Roll and fold the stuffed loin over itself so that it forms a tight cylinder and is ready for tying.



Tying the meat helps the roast cook evenly and carve nicely. You can tie standard knots, or try the more advanced butcher's knot—see the video at www.finecooking.com.

LET THE MEAT REST

When removed from the oven, pork loin—like all roasted meats—should be loosely covered with foil and left to stand in a warm place for 10 to 15 minutes so that the juices redistribute and the meat holds together better for carving.

I like to trim any loose pieces of fat from a boneless roast and then roll and tie it with string so it cooks evenly and carves well. A further possibility is to butterfly the loin (see the photos above), slitting it open to spread it with stuffing before reshaping and tying it. The Italians favor this technique in *arista*, which consists of a rolled pork loin stuffed with fresh herbs and garlic.

Brown the loin first for extra flavor

I usually brown the pork loin on top of the stove in a little oil before finishing it in the oven to ensure a dark, even crust. I use a medium-size flameproof roasting pan. If the pan is too large, the meat will dry out and the juices will scorch. If it's too small, however, the roast tends to be trapped by the sides and it steams in its own juices and cooks unevenly. I don't, by the way, bother with a roasting rack for pork; it's fine by me if the meat sits directly at the base of the pan and makes some nice brown juices for the gravy.

After being seared on the stove, the meat can be cooked in the oven at a more moderate temperature, sometimes as low as 350°F, depending on the recipe. Though pork used to have the reputation of being

fatty, the reality is that it tends to dry out easily, so a lower temperature is beneficial, together with, in some cases, a cover for the pan so the meat pot-roasts in moist heat.

Cook the pork until it's light pink and still juicy. Years ago, when trichinosis was a concern, pork was traditionally cooked to well done. This meant that it was roasted to an internal temperature of 170°F, with no trace of pink at the center. Now, however, it's generally considered safe by most cooks (and definitely tastier) to eat pork that's juicy and very lightly pink. It should register 145°F on an instant-read thermometer when it comes out of the oven. For more on meat temperatures, see *From Our Test Kitchen*, p. 78.

Even though the pork is juicy, it always benefits from a little sauce. When I'm roasting uncovered, I'll make a gravy on the stovetop with the pan juices. The gravy's color and flavor will come from the caramelized juices in the bottom of the roasting pan. I add a mixture of stock, wine, or water and boil, stirring to deglaze the juices and then to concentrate and reduce the gravy until it's rich and slightly syrupy. When I'm pot-roasting pork, I make a sauce from the liquid in which I cooked the pork, removing the pork before reducing the liquid.

Pot-Roasted Pork Loin Stuffed with Prunes & Dried Apricots

Serves four to six.

The combination of roast pork and dried fruit is time-honored and hard to beat. In this recipe, the pork is stuffed with fruit and almonds and served in a spicy red wine sauce that's reminiscent of sauerbraten. I like to use a full-bodied red wine, such as one from the Rhône or a Syrah. Wild rice is a good accompaniment.

2-pound boneless pork loin
½ cup dried apricots
4 to 6 whole blanched almonds, toasted
½ cup pitted prunes
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ cup red-wine vinegar
2 cups dry red wine
1 cup veal stock or homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth; more if needed

Heat the oven to 350°F. Trim the pork and butterfly it (see the photos at left). Stuff 4 to 6 of the apricots with almonds and wrap each apricot with a prune. Lay the prunes along the center of the cut surface of the pork, adding more stuffed fruit if needed. Reshape and tie the roast (following the photos at left). Sprinkle it on all sides with salt and pepper. Coarsely chop the remaining prunes and apricots.



Heat the butter and oil in a Dutch oven (for a definition, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 77) over medium-high heat and brown the pork thoroughly on all sides, 8 to 10 minutes total. Take out the pork, add the onion, and sauté until it starts to turn brown, about 3 minutes. Stir in ½ teaspoon pepper, the thyme, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 1 minute. Add the vinegar and simmer 1 minute. Add the wine and simmer until it's reduced by almost half, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in the chopped fruit and the stock or broth. Replace the pork, pushing it down into the sauce, cover the pot, and bring to a boil.

Put the pork in the heated oven and cook, basting with the pan juices and turning occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the meat registers 145°F, about 45 minutes. If the sauce reduces rapidly during cooking, add more broth. When the pork is done, the sauce should be dark and reduced by about half with a slightly thick consistency; if it's thin, remove the meat and reduce the sauce by simmering it on the stovetop.

Roast Pork Loin with Garlic & Rosemary (Arista)

Serves four to six; yields ¾ cup sauce.

Roasting the meat with milk is a traditional Italian method that also produces a delicious gravy. I like to serve this dish with roasted shallots and garlic cloves and a green vegetable like zucchini or green beans.

2-pound boneless pork loin
4 large cloves garlic
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
1½ tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh rosemary; plus more sprigs for garnish
1 teaspoon black peppercorns, cracked
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup whole milk; more if needed

Heat the oven to 400°F. Trim and butterfly the pork (see the photos at left). Mince the garlic, sprinkle the salt over it on the cutting board, and repeatedly scrape the flat side of a chef's knife over the garlic until it has a paste-like consistency. Scrape the garlic into a small bowl and mix in the rosemary, pepper, and 2 tablespoons of the oil. Spread two-thirds of this paste on the inside of the pork and then roll and tie it (following the photos at left); reserve the remaining paste.

Heat the remaining oil in a Dutch oven (for a definition, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 77)



over medium-high heat and brown the meat thoroughly on all sides, about 2 minutes on each side. Pour the milk into the pan and then spread the remaining rosemary-garlic paste on top of the pork. Cover and roast in the oven, basting occasionally with the pan juices, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the meat registers 145°F, 30 to 40 minutes. If the sauce reduces rapidly during cooking, add more milk.

Transfer the pork to a carving board, cover it loosely with foil, and let it rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Whisk the sauce vigorously to break up the clumps of milk solids and smooth the texture. If the sauce looks very watery, simmer it on the stovetop until it's reduced to about ¾ cup. Taste and adjust the seasonings. To serve, carve the pork into thick slices (discarding the strings) and arrange overlapping slices on a platter. Spoon the sauce over the pork and decorate with the rosemary sprigs.

Anne Willan is the founder and director of La Varenne Cooking School in France. Her latest book is Cooking with Wine. ♦

Green Beans with Tomatoes & Onions

Serves four to six.

This green bean ragoût is delicious as a pasta sauce, with cooked shrimp added, if you like. Or serve it with roasted chicken or lamb, or over soft polenta. The crushed red chile flakes make it somewhat spicy, so cut back on them if you have milder tastes.

- 1 can (28 ounces) whole tomatoes**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 1 large onion, cut into medium dice (about 1½ cups)**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt; more to taste**
- 6 medium cloves garlic, chopped**
- 10 ounces fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into thirds**
- ½ teaspoon crushed red chile flakes**
- 2½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth or water, or a combination; more as needed**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil**
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper; more to taste**
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Pour the tomatoes and their juices into a sieve set over a bowl. Squeeze the tomatoes to extract the juices and seeds and then crush them with your hands; put the tomatoes in the bowl with the juices and discard the seeds.

Heat the oil in a large, straight-sided sauté pan set over medium heat. Add the onion and salt; cook until the onion is translucent, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes and their juices, the green beans, chile flakes, and broth or water. Simmer, stirring frequently and adding more broth or water if necessary, until the beans are fork-tender and fully cooked (taste one to check) and the liquid has the consistency of a stew, 25 to 30 minutes.

Add the basil and pepper; taste and adjust the seasonings. Serve sprinkled with the grated cheese and parsley.



Cooking Green Beans for More Flavor

BY EVE FELDER

A leisurely simmer helps green beans become deliciously tender

almost always cook slender, beautiful haricots verts briefly. These small French green beans don't need more than a flash in a sauté pan or a rapid blanching in boiling water, just long enough to get crisp-tender. But when I have a pile of thicker, more mature green beans on my hands, I choose a completely different approach.

For beans like these, I get the most flavorful results by longer cooking—specifically, by simmering them on the stovetop. The technique gives the beans a chance to release their flavor, meld with the other ingredients in the dish, and develop a soft, yielding texture that's very appealing. I don't mean to suggest that I cook beans until they're mushy. Fifteen to thirty minutes in a skillet is sufficient to draw out flavor and get the fork-tender texture I like.

A simple technique that bends to your tastes

I start by heating oil or butter in a pan, adding an aromatic ingredient like onion, and then adding the green beans

along with a liquid, which could be water, broth, or the juices from canned tomatoes (along with the tomatoes themselves). Depending on how much of a sauce you want to end up with, you can add more or less liquid.

Simmer the beans long enough to cook them through completely; they should be just starting to collapse and get wrinkly. I like the term “fork-tender” to describe their doneness. Another way to check doneness is to just pick up a bean and taste it. It should be completely tender, not merely “crisp-tender” or al dente.

Long-cooked green beans won't have the vibrant greenness they get from blanching, but you can help them look their best by cooking them without a lid. Covering the pan causes acids to build up, which dulls the beans' color—although not their flavor. Even without the lid, they'll still fade a little. I don't worry about it. Green beans cooked this way will win you over with their extra tenderness and terrific flavor.

Green Beans with Mushrooms, Cream & Toasted Breadcrumbs

Serves four.

This is a modern rendition of the green bean and mushroom casserole with fried onion rings that was a staple of my childhood. I've replaced the onion rings with toasted breadcrumbs.

FOR THE BREADCRUMBS:

1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs
¼ cup olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper
to taste

FOR THE GREEN BEANS:

4 tablespoons unsalted butter
8 ounces white or cremini mushrooms, quartered
1 small onion, finely diced (about ½ cup)
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3 medium cloves garlic, minced
10 ounces fresh green beans, trimmed
¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth or water, or a combination
½ cup heavy or whipping cream

Make the breadcrumbs: Heat

the oven to 375°F. Toss the breadcrumbs in a bowl with the olive oil and pepper. Spread them on a baking sheet and toast until golden, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes.

Cook the beans: Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and onion. Increase the heat to high to reheat the pan and then drop the heat back to medium. When the mushrooms are slightly golden, add the salt. Sauté until the mushrooms are deep golden, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, green beans, and pepper.

Add the broth or water and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has reduced by about three-quarters and the beans are fork-tender and fully cooked (taste one to check), about 20 minutes.

Add the cream and simmer until the sauce is reduced to a very thick consistency, about 10 minutes. Serve the beans and sauce topped with the toasted breadcrumbs.

Tips for prepping green beans

- ❖ Be sure to start with fresh, snappy green beans.
- ❖ Gather a small bunch and cut off the stem ends. The thin, pointy end that looks like a tail can also be trimmed, though it's not necessary unless it's especially tough.
- ❖ If you're serving the beans for a party, cutting them into halves or thirds makes eating them a little easier. Slice them on the bias for more visual interest.



Trim, simmer, and taste



Trimming and cutting goes a lot faster if you gather a handful of beans in a neat bunch so their ends are aligned.



A wide sauté pan and a little bit of liquid lets the beans simmer gently. Add enough liquid to halfway surround the beans.



"Fork-tender" means you can easily pierce the beans with the tines. Taste a bean; it should be completely tender.

Green Beans with Pancetta, Garlic & Herbs

Serves four.

The olive oil and pancetta create an unctuous sauce that barely coats the beans.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 4 ounces pancetta** (about three ¼-inch-thick slices), cut into small dice
- 3 medium cloves garlic**, chopped

- ½ pound fresh green beans**, trimmed
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt**; more to taste
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary**
- Freshly ground black pepper** to taste

Heat the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat until it shimmers. Add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until the fat is rendered and the pancetta is slightly crisped, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and the beans and toss to coat with the oil.

Add enough water to just cover the beans. Add the salt. Simmer until the beans are fork-tender and fully cooked (taste one to check) and the liquid has cooked down to a thick sauce, 25 to 30 minutes. If the beans are tender but the sauce seems watery, boil it briefly to thicken.

Toss in the parsley and rosemary and season to taste with salt and pepper.



Green Beans with Toasted Slivered Almonds

Serves four.

The extra butter added at the end helps emulsify the sauce, but you can get away with less, if you like.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- ⅓ cup slivered almonds**
- ½ pound fresh green beans**, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic** (2 to 3 cloves)
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 cup water**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the almonds and cook, tossing frequently, until they're light brown and toasted, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer them with a slotted spoon to a plate lined with paper towels.

Add the green beans, garlic, and salt to the pan. Toss to coat the beans with the residual butter. Add the water and simmer gently, tossing occasionally, until the beans are fork-tender and fully cooked (taste one to check), about 15 minutes. The liquid should be reduced to about ¼ cup or less; if there's too much liquid, increase the heat to a boil and let it reduce briefly. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons butter and toss to coat the beans and emulsify with the liquid. Add the pepper, toss, and adjust the seasonings as needed. Scatter the slivered almonds over the serving platter or over each serving.



Eve Felder is the associate dean for advanced cooking at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. ♦

How to Make a Crisp Potato Galette

Layer thinly sliced potatoes with cheese and fresh herbs for an irresistible savory tart

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

I like making potato galettes as much as I like eating them. There's something very satisfying about arranging layers of thinly sliced potatoes in slightly overlapping circles, sprinkling on just the right amount of cheese, and watching the layers stack up. If you've ever made the classic French potato dish *pommes Anna*, you might recognize the process. The big difference here is that a potato galette (or "cake") is made in a tart pan and baked in the oven, not crisped on the stovetop. This way, there's no cumbersome flipping, and the tarts don't require any attention once they're in the oven. All you have to do is wait for them to be tender and golden—and smell that heady aroma as they bake. After cooling a few minutes in the pan, the galette is ready to be cut into wedges and served with roast beef or pork, sliced chicken, or even fish. The wedges reheat beautifully, too.



Follow these steps for successful potato galettes



Start layering the herb-coated potato slices along the outside of the pan and work inward.



Sprinkle the first layer of potatoes with cheese, and then arrange the next layer of potatoes.



The last layers will mound up a bit higher than the top edge of the pan.

Don't worry if you don't cut perfectly even slices of potato. You'll have some very thin and some a bit thicker. These galettes are very forgiving—use your scraps to fill in spots and have fun layering.

Don't salt the potato slices while they're still in the mixing bowl: they'll tend to weep water. Wait until you're layering them to salt them, and then sprinkle on just enough salt to lightly cover all the potatoes.

For an extra-thick galette, use a taller tart or quiche pan or a springform pan and add more layers of potatoes and cheese. You'll need to reduce the oven temperature to 375°F and bake the galette for 15 to 20 minutes longer.

To make a wider but thinner galette, use a wider tart pan and arrange fewer layers of potatoes and cheese. Thin galettes make an especially nice base for slices of a juicy roast.

Be sure to get all the shallots and herbs into the tart. Sometimes they get left behind in the mixing bowl, so as you're finishing your layers, rub the remaining potato slices in the bits left in the bowl to carry them over.

Every galette you make will be different. It's impossible to say exactly how many potato slices you'll get into each galette. That means if your two or three potatoes don't weigh exactly 1 pound, err on the high side and cut more.

Customize your potato galettes

To make your first galette, follow the recipe at far right and the tips above to get a sense of how much of each ingredient is needed to fill a tart pan. After that, you might not need a recipe; you can use your favorite combination of potatoes and cheese in whatever size tart pan you like and make the galettes as thick or thin as you want.

They're very flexible—perfect for improvising.

Try red potatoes or baking potatoes in place of the Yukon Golds. For cheese, you can't go wrong with Parmigiano Reggiano (just be sure to buy the real thing if possible—you don't want a plastic-tasting mass-market Parmesan) or another good grating cheese like dry aged Mon-

terey Jack. I'm partial to Gruyère, as its nutty flavor pairs so well with Yukon Golds. Be careful of very soft cheeses that melt into pools; they'll just burn in the oven. I did go out on a limb once and put fresh goat cheese (along with a bit of Parmigiano) into a sweet potato galette, and I loved the tangy-sweet combination. (That recipe wouldn't fit into this

article, but you can find it at www.finecooking.com under "online extras.") For that last layer of flavor, choose an herb like thyme or rosemary that will stand up to the heat of the oven. Tossing the potatoes with softened shallots or garlic adds a nice earthiness, but if you're short on time, skip these, as the galettes are great without them.



A fully cooked golden galette recedes slightly from the top and sides of the pan.

Don't undercook the galette. You want the interior to be very tender and the outside to be crisp and nicely browned. Depending on the time of year, potatoes have varying degrees of moisture in them and will cook a little differently, so test frequently with a thin-tined fork to see if they're tender. At the same time, be wary of cooking too long, as some cheeses begin to taste bitter when overly browned.

To reheat a galette, cut it into wedges first. Wedges can go directly from the oven onto a plate, while a whole galette would need to cool a bit before you could remove it from the pan and cut it. Spread the wedges on a baking sheet and heat, uncovered, at 350°F for about 15 minutes.

Yukon Gold Gruyère Galette

Serves four to six as a side dish.

I like the combination of sweet, nutty Gruyère and the slight sharpness of Parmigiano Reggiano in this galette. Sometimes instead of thyme, I use a slightly smaller amount of rosemary.

- ¼ cup finely chopped shallots (from about 2 large shallots)**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil; plus ½ teaspoon for the pan (or use olive-oil spray for the pan)**
- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes (about 2 large or 3 medium), unpeeled and scrubbed**
- 1 heaping teaspoon very lightly chopped fresh thyme**
- Kosher salt**
- ½ cup finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano (about a 1½-ounce piece, grated on a box grater's small holes)**
- 1 cup finely grated Gruyère cheese (about 3½ ounces)**

Combine the shallots and 3 tablespoons of the oil in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce to a low simmer; cook the shallots until nicely softened (don't let them brown), about 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool completely (about 25 minutes at room temperature; cool them more quickly in the refrigerator, if you like).

Heat the oven to 400°F. Rub the bottom and inside edge of a 7½-inch tart pan with a removable bottom with the remaining ½ teaspoon olive oil or spray with olive-oil spray. Put the tart pan on a rimmed baking sheet lined with foil.

Slice the potatoes as thinly as possible (about ⅛ inch) with a chef's knife. Tip: If the potato wobbles, slice a thin lengthwise sliver off the bottom to stabilize it; then continue slicing crosswise. Discard the ends. Put the potato slices in a mixing bowl, add the shallots and olive oil along with the herbs and toss well to thoroughly coat the potatoes (a small rubber spatula works well).

Cover the bottom of the tart pan with a layer of potato slices, overlapping them slightly. Start along the outside edge of the tart pan and, making slightly overlapping rings, move inward until the bottom is covered with one layer of potatoes. Sprinkle the potatoes with salt (a generous ⅛ teaspoon) and then sprinkle about one-quarter of the Parmigiano and about one-quarter of the Gruyère over all. Arrange another layer of potatoes, season with salt, sprinkle with

cheese, and repeat two more times, until you have four layers of potatoes. (This is a messy job; you'll need a damp towel to wipe your hands between layers.) Top the last layer with more salt and any remaining cheese.

Bake the galette until the top is a reddish golden brown and the potatoes are tender in all places (a fork with thin tines should poke easily through all the layers), 45 to 50 minutes. The bottom will be crisp and the sides brown.

Let the galette cool for 10 or 15 minutes in the pan. It will then be cool enough to handle but still plenty hot inside for serving. Have a cutting board nearby. Run a paring knife around the edge of the galette to loosen it and carefully remove the tart ring by gently pressing the tart bottom up. Slide a very thin spatula under and all around the bottom layer to free the galette from the tart bottom. Use the spatula to gently slide the galette onto a cutting board. Cut into four or six wedges, or as many as you like.



Individual Potato Galettes

For a special dinner, you can make potato galettes in individual tart pans. The amount of ingredients in the recipe at left will fill (with a little to spare) four 4½-inch tart pans with removable bottoms. Baking times will be just slightly shorter, but remember, you can bake these ahead, remove them from the tart rings, and reheat them on a baking sheet. A mini galette makes a lovely bed for a slice of beef tenderloin with a little sauce.

Susie Middleton is the executive editor of Fine Cooking. ♦

Dinner in a Skillet: Five Quick Chicken Sautés

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL

Everyone I know has the same weeknight dilemma: what to make that's lickety-split yet doesn't skimp on flavor. In my house, a favorite solution that never gets boring is a quick chicken sauté. This dish is a one-pan wonder with vegetables and golden chunks of sautéed boneless chicken, finished in a simple sauce that can take on endless flavor possibilities, from a puckery-bright lemon sauce to a well-mannered sherry cream sauce. By following my method, you'll avoid the usual problem of dry, overcooked chicken. And every version of this dish can be prepped and cooked in the time it takes to prepare a simple companion starch, like noodles, rice, polenta, or mashed or roasted potatoes.

Cook in batches to sear the food, not steam it

For these sautés, I cook the vegetables and chicken separately so that each can have plenty of room in the pan. If I piled everything in together, the food would just simmer rather than quickly sear and stay juicy. I start with the vegetables and then set them aside. The next step is sautéing the chicken, and this is the key to the dish's success. Little chunks of skinless chicken breast love to stick to the pan, so it's important that the pan and the oil are good and hot before you add the chicken. Even then, the chicken will stick—but it will also begin to brown. That's good. This way you're sure to get little caramelized nubs (the French call this delicious brown stuff *fond*) that will

ultimately dissolve into the pan sauce, giving it a savory richness.

Don't use a nonstick pan, but do let the chicken sit undisturbed in the pan for about a minute. Once the chicken pieces take on a golden-brown crust, shimmy the straight edge of a metal spatula under them to loosen and flip them without tearing.

Since the chicken is cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces, it takes just a few minutes to finish cooking. It's important not to let the chicken overcook, as it would dry out and become chewy. To check for doneness, I just cut a good-size piece in half. The chicken should still be faintly pink in the center—mere moments from being cooked through—when it gets pulled from the pan. The chicken will actually continue to cook through from its residual heat.

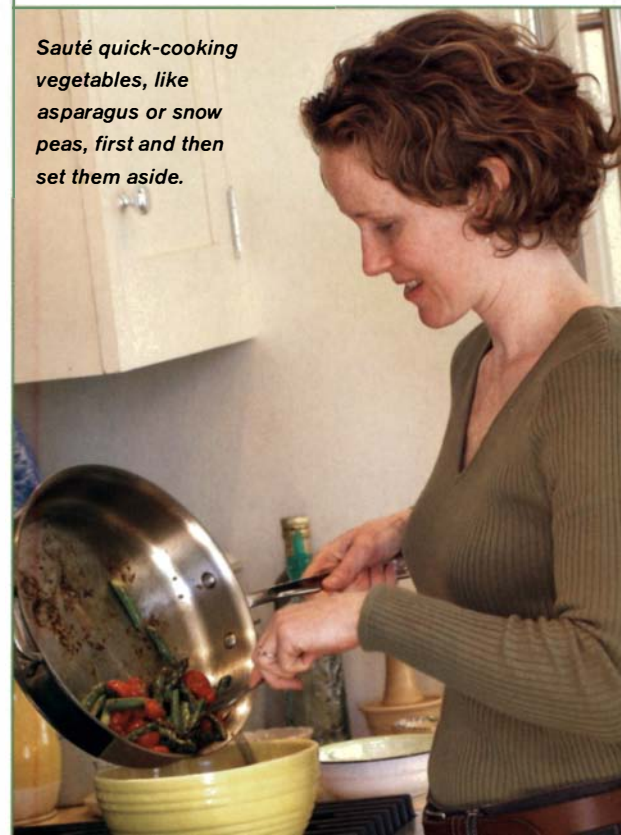
As the last step, add your sauce ingredients to the pan after removing the chicken. To keep this dish quick, I don't reduce the pan sauces dramatically—just enough to thicken them and let the flavors connect. Depending on how much body I think the sauce needs, I might add a bit of cornstarch.

Once the sauce has simmered for a few minutes and any caramelized bits on the bottom of the pan have been scraped up and dissolved into the sauce, I stir the chicken and vegetables back in, but only to coat them with the sauce. If you were to continue cooking the chicken, it would toughen and dry out. By this point, your pasta or rice should be just about ready. Perfect timing—in no time at all.

Follow this fast method for a saucy sauté with moist chicken and savory vegetables



Sauté quick-cooking vegetables, like asparagus or snow peas, first and then set them aside.



Quick Chicken Sauté with Asparagus, Cherry Tomatoes & Lemon Pan Sauce

Serves two.

2 medium-size boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (12 ounces total), cut into ¾-inch chunks
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil
8 cherry tomatoes, halved
6 medium asparagus spears, ends trimmed, spears split down the middle and cut into 2-inch pieces (or 8 skinny spears cut into 2-inch pieces)
3 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced
6 tablespoons water or homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1 tablespoon minced fresh basil

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the tomatoes and asparagus and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have softened and the asparagus is golden brown around the edges, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl. Heat another 1 tablespoon oil in the pan and add the chicken. When the underside of the chicken has turned deep golden brown, (about 1 minute), turn it with a metal spatula. Turn occasionally for even browning until almost cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the chicken to the bowl of vegetables.

Reduce the heat to medium and heat the remaining 2 teaspoons oil in the pan. Add the garlic, cooking until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the water or broth and the lemon juice, using a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan and blend them into the sauce. Simmer for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and stir in the butter. Stir in the chicken, asparagus, tomatoes, any juices, and the basil. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately.



For a golden-brown crust—and less sticking—let the chicken sit undisturbed in the pan for one minute before turning.



Take the chicken out of the pan when it's still faintly pink in the center. Residual heat will cook it through without drying it out.



Dissolve the flavorful browned bits left in the pan from the chicken to enrich the sauce.



Quick Chicken Sauté with Walnuts, Curly Endive & Orange Pan Sauce

Serves two.

- 2 medium-size boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (12 ounces total), cut into ¾-inch chunks**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon olive oil**
- 6 ounces curly endive (curly chicory), washed, dried, and chopped into 2-inch pieces (about 6 cups, loosely packed); for more on chicories, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 76**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- ¼ teaspoon coriander seed, crushed**
- ¼ cup water or homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**
- ½ cup orange juice, preferably freshly squeezed**
- 1 tablespoon good-quality white-wine vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped toasted walnuts**

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the endive and cook, stirring frequently, until deep green but still crisp-tender, about 90 seconds. Transfer to a medium bowl.

Heat another 1 tablespoon oil in the pan and add the chicken. When the underside of the chicken has turned deep golden brown (after about 1 minute), turn it with a metal spatula. Turn occasionally for even browning until almost cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes, and transfer to the bowl of endive.

Reduce the heat to medium, heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil in the pan, and then add the garlic and crushed coriander. Cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the water or broth, orange juice, and vinegar. Use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan and blend them into the sauce. Simmer vigorously until the sauce has reduced and thickened slightly, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the butter, stirring until blended. Stir in the chicken and endive along with any juices, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve sprinkled with the parsley and walnuts.

This sauté is delicious with mashed sweet potatoes or basmati rice.

Quick Chicken Sauté with Tomatoes, Black Olives & Basil

Serves two.

- 2 medium-size boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (12 ounces total), cut into ¾-inch chunks**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 2 large anchovy fillets, mashed to a paste (about 1½ teaspoons)**
- ¼ teaspoon finely grated orange zest**
- 1 can (14½ ounces) diced tomatoes, with their juices (about 1¾ cups)**
- 5 kalamata olives, pitted and coarsely chopped (about 2 tablespoons)**
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced fresh basil**
- Freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

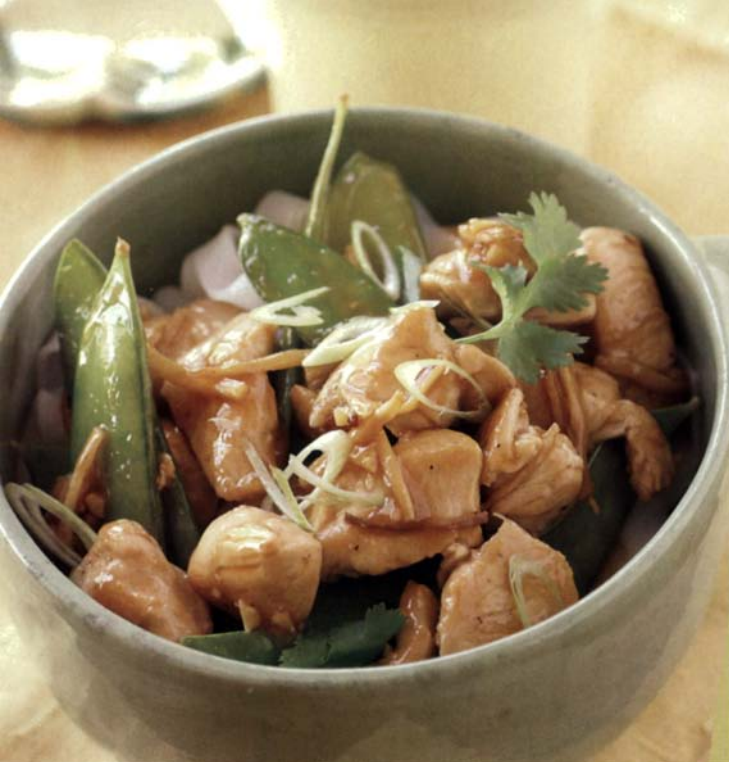
Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, and when its underside has turned deep golden brown (after about 1 minute), turn it with a metal spatula. Turn occasionally for even browning until almost cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.

Reduce the heat to medium. Heat the remaining 1½ teaspoons oil in the pan and add the garlic, anchovies, and orange zest. Cook until the garlic is golden and the mixture is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes with their juices and the olives and simmer, using a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan and blend them into the sauce. Cook for about 5 minutes to blend the flavors.

Reduce the heat to medium low and stir in the chicken and any juices. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the basil and serve immediately, topped with the freshly grated cheese.

Try serving this sauté tossed with ziti or spooned over steaming polenta.





Quick Chicken Sauté with Snow Peas & Teriyaki Pan Sauce

Serves two.

- 2 medium-size boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (12 ounces total), cut into ¾-inch chunks**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch**
- ¼ cup water or homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil or vegetable oil**
- 5 ounces fresh snow peas, trimmed**
- 1-inch chunk fresh ginger, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks (about 2 tablespoons)**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**
- ¼ cup sake or mirin (sweet rice wine)**
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce**
- 2 tablespoons rice-wine vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon honey**
- 2 tablespoons crunchy bean sprouts, such as soy or lentil, washed well, or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**

Fresh Asian egg noodles or rice noodles pair well with this sauté.

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, blend the cornstarch into the water or broth.

Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the snow peas and cook, stirring frequently, until they're slightly browned and softened but still crisp, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl. Heat another 1 tablespoon oil in the pan and add the chicken. When the underside of the chicken has turned deep golden brown (after about 1 minute), turn it with a metal spatula. Turn occasionally for even browning until almost cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the chicken to the bowl of peas.

Heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil in the pan. Add the ginger and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Reduce the heat to medium, add the garlic, and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the sake or mirin, soy sauce, vinegar, honey, and the cornstarch mixture. Use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan and blend them into the sauce. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low, and toss the chicken and snow peas into the sauce. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately, sprinkled with the sprouts or cilantro.

Quick Chicken Sauté with Mushrooms, Baby Limas & Sherry-Cream Sauce

Serves two.

- 2 medium-size boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (12 ounces total), cut into ¾-inch chunks**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup water or homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- 3 tablespoons dry sherry**
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon olive oil**
- ½ pound mixed fresh mushrooms, sliced**
- 1 medium shallot, minced (about 2 tablespoons)**
- ½ cup frozen baby lima beans, thawed**
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme**

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, combine the water or broth, cream, and sherry.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the

mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden brown, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl.

Heat another 1 tablespoon oil to the pan and add the chicken. When the underside of the chicken has turned deep golden brown (after about 1 minute), turn it with a metal spatula. Turn occasionally for even browning until almost cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the chicken to the bowl of mushrooms.

Reduce the heat to medium, heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil in the pan, and then add the shallot. Cook until softened, about 1 minute. Add the cream mixture and use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan and blend them into the sauce. Add the lima beans and thyme and let the sauce simmer actively until slightly thickened, 2 to 4 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and stir in the chicken and mushrooms and any juices. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately.

Serve this sauté over steaming split biscuits, spooned over mashed potatoes, or tossed with egg noodles.

Maryellen Driscoll is Fine Cooking's editor at large. She raises chickens in upstate New York. ♦



True classic

Ragù alla



Bolognese

A lengthy simmer and a touch of milk give intense flavor and a tender texture to this traditional meat sauce

BY BIBA CAGGIANO

When I arrived in New York from Italy as a young bride in 1960, one of the first dishes I cooked was tagliatelle with ragù alla Bolognese, the celebrated pasta and meat sauce of my native Bologna. At that time, my cooking skills were limited, but once I began preparing the sauce, my taste buds and memory came to the rescue. I knew how soft the vegetables were supposed to be, and I recalled the light color of the meat after it was properly cooked. I also remembered the thick consistency of the sauce at the end of its long cooking. So I chopped, minced, and measured, and let my palate take over.

Then, I sat back and waited for the final judgment. When my husband walked through the door, he marched straight into the kitchen, looked at the sauce, tasted it, and, smiling broadly, said, "Terrific! Is the pasta in the water yet?"

Cook slowly and add milk to enhance the sauce

Ragù alla Bolognese probably originated in the peasant kitchens of Bologna over a century ago. According to L'Accademia Italiana della Cucina, an organization devoted to the study of Italian gastronomy, it was first made with cuts of inexpensive beef and an array of basic vegetables. The ragù was cooked slowly with the addition of broth and milk for several hours in

order to extract as much flavor as possible from the meat and vegetables. The milk tenderized the meat, while the slow cooking reduced the sauce and concentrated its flavor.

In spite of the Accademia's explanation of what constitutes the most typical ragù alla Bolognese, each cook in Bologna believes that he or she is the true interpreter of the ragù. Everyone, however, can agree on some basic steps.

Ragù isn't the heavy tomato and meat sauce to which you might be accustomed. Rather it's a flavorful essence of meat, vegetables, wine, milk, and tomatoes. There's no garlic in this ragù. Like much of Bologna's cuisine, this sauce relies on subtle flavors. The base of chopped onion, carrot, and celery is always the same, but the type of meat and liquid changes depending on the area and the cook. Pork, beef, veal, chicken livers, and occasionally sausage, alone or in combination, are the preferred meats. In addition to milk, beef or chicken stock, as well as local white or red wine, are the principal cooking liquids.

Make the ragù once, and then improvise like my mother did

My mother, who was born and raised on a farm, favored ground pork or a little beef in her ragù. More often than not, however, the sauce she made was determined by the availability of ingredients and their



Located in the northern Italian province of Emilia-Romagna, Bologna is famous for its cuisine, especially for its beloved meat ragù.

Make and freeze

Ragù alla Bolognese freezes beautifully, so it's not a bad idea to make a double batch of the recipe and freeze any leftovers in airtight plastic containers.

expense. During and after World War II, when staples were hard to come by, she made the ragù with whatever meat she could find. In hard times like those, she used more vegetables to stretch the sauce. To maximize their flavor, she would add a few tablespoons of tomato paste diluted in water, and then simmer the mixture for almost three hours.

In affluent times and generally on Sunday (the traditional day for making the ragù), my mother added prosciutto or pancetta and a few chicken livers to the sauce. I remember waking up on Sunday mornings to the familiar, lingering aroma of the slow, simmering sauce. Later, the ragù would be tossed

with tagliatelle, the long egg noodles of Bologna, or with potato gnocchi. During holidays, we would spread the sauce on wide sheets of spinach pasta and layer it with béchamel sauce and Parmigiano Reggiano for a divine lasagne alla Bolognese.

Today, I make ragù often, using a recipe similar to my mother's. I keep it simple and use ground pork and prosciutto. If I have time, I prepare it with fresh pasta, but it also goes wonderfully with dried pastas like tagliatelle or garganelli (ridged quill-like macaroni). I've also made sure to pass my mother's recipe along to my children. Through them, her traditions continue on.

Ask for ground pork from the shoulder

Following Biba's advice, we tested this recipe with ground pork from the shoulder (Boston-style butt), as well as with ground pork made from a variety of cuts. Biba was right: The sauce made with pork shoulder was richer and more flavorful, and the meat had a soft, juicy texture that held up to the sauce's slow simmer.

—the editors

Sauté the vegetables and meat in stages before cooking the sauce slowly



Cook the finely diced carrots, onions, and celery in butter and oil until the vegetables are soft and turn light brown.



Small bits of prosciutto give the sauce rich, full flavor and a traditional Italian feel.



Adding ½ cup whole milk to the reduced sauce smoothes out and enriches its flavor.



At the end of cooking, the ragù should have a thick but saucy consistency and a light reddish-brown color, tinted by the addition of the milk.

Ragù alla Bolognese

Yields about 4½ cups, enough for 1¼ to 1½ pounds of pasta; serves six to eight.

Gently toss fresh or dried pasta (see the sidebar at right) with this ragù the Italian way, ladling it in gradually so it evenly coats the noodles but doesn't overwhelm or saturate them.

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 small yellow onion, finely diced**
- ½ medium carrot, peeled and finely diced**
- 1 medium rib celery, finely diced**
- 1 pound ground pork (preferably from the shoulder)**
- ¼ pound thickly sliced prosciutto di Parma, very finely diced**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- ½ cup dry white wine**
- 1 can (28 ounces) Italian plum tomatoes with their juices, passed through a food mill to remove their seeds**
- 1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth or beef broth**
- ½ cup hot milk**

Heat the butter and oil in a small Dutch oven or a wide, heavy-based saucepan over medium heat. When the butter begins to foam, add the onion, carrot, and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're lightly golden and soft, 5 to 7 minutes. Raise the heat to high, add the pork and prosciutto, and season lightly with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring and breaking up the pork with a large spoon until the meat loses its raw color, 3 to 5 minutes (the meat won't brown). Add the wine and cook, stirring, until it's almost completely reduced, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the broth. As soon as the liquid comes to a boil, reduce the heat to low and cook the sauce at a bare simmer for 2 hours. Add the hot milk and simmer half an hour longer, stirring occasionally. At this point, the sauce should have a thick but saucy consistency and a light reddish-brown color. If the sauce has thickened before the cooking time is up, cover the pot. If the sauce is still too thin at the end of cooking, continue to simmer gently, uncovered, until it's thick. Taste and adjust the seasonings before serving tossed with your favorite pasta.

WINE SUGGESTION

For wine choices when serving Ragù alla Bolognese, try pouring something Italian that's light and fruity, such as a Valpolicella, a Dolcetto, or a Sangiovese di Romagna.

Biba Caggiano, the author of Biba's Taste of Italy, is the chef-owner of Biba in Sacramento, California. ♦

Pair the ragù with fresh or dried pasta

Biba Caggiano and most Italian chefs we've talked to agree that fresh and dried pastas offer their own unique strengths. Fresh pasta, whether homemade or purchased at a good Italian specialty store, has a dazzlingly light quality that partners well with rich vegetable or meat sauces. The firm, toothy texture of dried pasta, which Italians refer to as *al dente*, gives a preparation a more sturdy, hearty base. Both homemade or dried pastas are preferable to the gummy factory-made "fresh" pastas on supermarket shelves. Never rinse either dried or fresh pasta after cooking, as this removes its surface starches which add texture to the finished dish and help the sauce cling to the pasta. —the editors

Fresh pasta

Tagliatelle, the traditional long, flat noodles of Bologna (about ¼-inch wide and ⅛-inch thick) are perfect for twirling up the meaty ragù. Like all fresh pastas, tagliatelle only needs to be cooked for a short time in well-salted boiling water, until the noodles are soft and tender (anywhere from 30 seconds to 3 or 4 minutes, depending on their thickness and how long they've been drying). Boil the pasta just before serving, as it will quickly lose its delicate texture. For a fresh pasta recipe, see "online extras" at www.finecooking.com.



Dried pasta

Short, ridged dried pastas like rigatoni and penne are also fine accompaniments for Ragù alla Bolognese. The ridges of these dried pastas catch the sauce, and the pastas' compact shapes match the sauce's meaty, rich texture. Another option is the nests of imported dried tagliatelle or pappardelle (now more available in U.S. supermarkets), which cook longer than their fresh counterparts (about 6 minutes), but have a wonderful texture.



BY KATY SPARKS

Pairing Beef

Serves eight

**Endive Salad with
Blue Cheese, Pears &
Spice-Candied Walnuts**

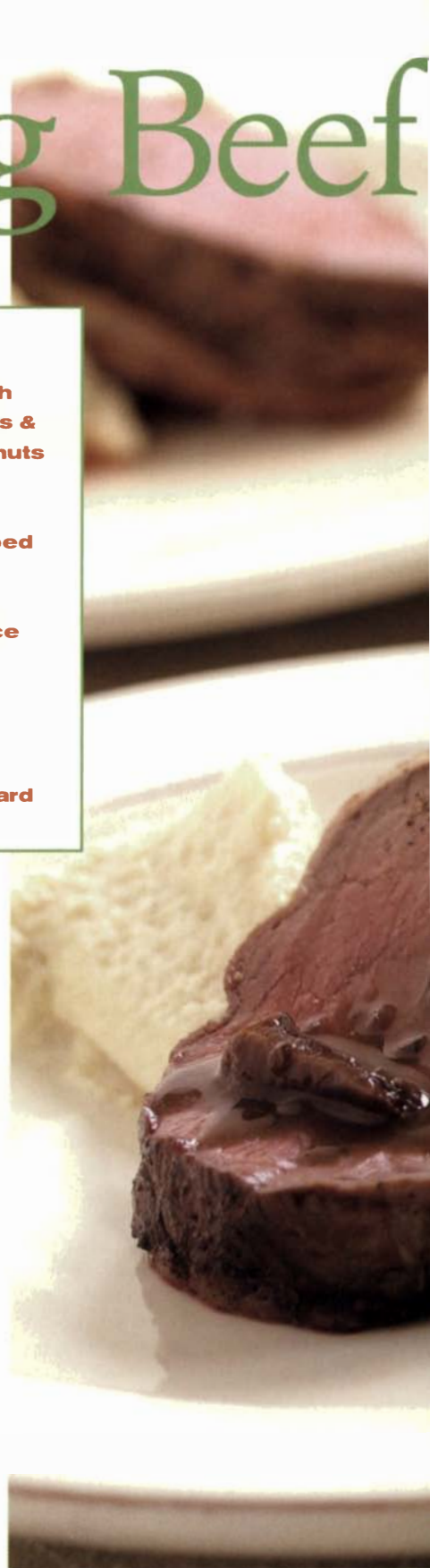


**Filet of Beef Wrapped
in Bacon with
Wild Mushroom
& Rosemary Sauce**

**Celery Root &
Apple Purée**



Butterscotch Custard



I love having friends over for dinner,

and I do it often. And I'm convinced that for me, entertaining at home is long on fun and short on stress because of two key points I keep in mind when making up the menu. The first is balancing and bridging flavors so the lineup of dishes makes sense as a whole (that way, all your guests are impressed and satisfied and you'll feel proud). Right alongside that is planning a stress-free menu, with little touches that elevate each dish to invite-your-friends special—and that can all be prepared long before anyone rings the doorbell.

For this menu, I wanted something easy, but with a little drama that would get everyone excited, so I chose filet of beef. Filet (also called tenderloin) is a real crowd pleaser that takes well to earthy flavors.

With that as my starting point, the rest was easy. Beef filet's earthiness is a natural for wild mushrooms, and I wanted to counter that with a tangy accent, so I added cider to the sauce (apple is just about

Tenderloin with Fall Flavors



my favorite autumn flavor). Things were going in a kind of woodsy direction, so I added a touch of sherry vinegar (it's aged in wood). Piny rosemary completes the picture. Celery root purée is an earthy and delicious alternative to mashed potatoes, and an apple in the purée links to the cider in the mushroom sauce.



Because beef filet is rich, I chose a salad that was light yet had some savory touches—blue cheese and crunchy spiced walnuts. And for dessert, individual butterscotch custards, which are made ahead, are perfect because I find that once you sit down to dinner, you want to stay with your guests.

Take a few minutes to make a plan. Again, many of these simple elements can be done a day or two before the dinner: the dressing and spiced nuts for the salad, and the tasty sauce for the filet on p. 71, which gets its flavor from sautéed mushrooms and beef stock rather than from pan juices. The butterscotch custard actually must be made the day before, too. You even can whip the cream before serving time and chill it in a cheesecloth-lined strainer set over a bowl.

timeline

Two days ahead

Order the filet of beef.

Buy the pears and blue cheese; let them ripen.

Find sources for less common ingredients (sherry vinegar, wild mushrooms, celery root).

The day before

Make the custards.

Make the spice-candied nuts.

Make the salad dressing.

Make the sauce for the filet.

That morning

Wrap the filet in bacon and tie it.

Wash and dry the greens.

Slice the cheese.

Two hours before serving

Make the purée; keep warm over a water bath.

Whip the cream for the custards; keep chilled in a cheesecloth-lined strainer over a bowl.

Heat the oven.

One hour before

Roast the filet.

Just before serving

Reheat the sauce gently as the filet rests.

Assemble the salads.

Endive Salad with Blue Cheese, Pears & Spice-Candied Walnuts

Serves six to eight.

FOR THE NUTS:

1/3 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon ground star anise or anise seed
3 1/2 ounces (1 cup) walnut halves

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

1 medium shallot, minced
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

FOR THE SALAD:

1 small head curly endive (curly chicory) or frisée, tough outer and large inner leaves removed and discarded, tender leaves torn into bite-size pieces (to yield 3 cups)
1 small head Bibb or Boston lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces (to yield 3 cups)
2 large heads Belgian endive or 2 small bunches watercress, sliced into bite-size pieces (to yield 3 cups)
2 ripe Bartlett or Anjou pears
1/4 pound Gorgonzola or Roquefort, sliced

Make the spiced nuts: Heat the oven to 350°F. Combine the sugar, cinnamon, coriander, and star anise or anise seed. Put the walnut halves on a baking sheet and toast them very lightly in the oven, just 2 to 3 minutes. Meanwhile, set a large skillet over medium heat and put the sugar mixture in it, shaking the pan to spread it evenly. When



the sugar starts to melt a little, add the walnuts while they're still warm. Shake the pan vigorously until the sugar melts completely, turns medium amber, and coats the nuts as much as possible, 2 to 7 minutes. Keep a good watch; this happens fast. You'll need to nudge the nuts

with a wooden spoon to cover them as much as possible. (This won't be a completely smooth caramel, and the sugar will adhere to the nuts in patches.) Scrape the nuts onto a plate to cool in one layer. When completely cool, seal in an airtight container.

Make the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, combine the shallot, salt, and vinegar. Whisk in the olive oil. Season with freshly ground black pepper and refrigerate until ready to serve. (The dressing can age for anywhere from a few hours to a day or two.)

Assemble the salad: In a large bowl, toss the greens together with your hands. Just before serving, whisk the vinaigrette to blend and toss it with the greens. Taste for seasoning; the salad may need a bit more salt and pepper. Mound the greens in the center of each plate. Slice the pears (I like to leave the peel on for color and nutrients). Divide the cheese and the pear slices among the plates. Garnish with the spice-candied walnuts and serve.



Add warm walnuts to melted sugar for spice-candied nuts. To coat them evenly, shake the pan or nudge the nuts with a wooden spoon.

Filet of Beef Wrapped in Bacon with Wild Mushroom & Rosemary Sauce

Serves six to eight.

If you can't find oyster mushrooms, use enough shiitakes or cremini to total about half a pound.

FOR THE SAUCE:

4 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 medium shallots, minced
3 ounces cremini mushrooms, stems removed, caps cut into ¼x½-inch strips
3 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps cut into ¼x½-inch strips
3 ounces oyster mushrooms, trimmed and cut into ¼x½-inch strips
¾ cup dry red wine
¾ cup apple cider
3 tablespoons cider vinegar
1½ cups beef broth (low-salt canned is fine)
2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary

FOR THE BEEF:

1 whole tenderloin of beef (3½ to 4 pounds, trimmed)
Freshly ground black pepper
4 to 6 ounces apple-smoked bacon, sliced medium thick
Kosher salt to taste
4 large sprigs fresh rosemary

Make the sauce: Set a large skillet over medium heat and put in 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add the shallots and sauté until tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook until lightly browned, about 7 minutes. Add the wine, cider, and cider vinegar; raise the heat to medium high and reduce the liquids by about three-quarters. Add the beef broth and again reduce by half. Take the pan off the heat. Add the rosemary, whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter (if you make the sauce ahead, wait to add the butter until just before serving), and taste for seasoning.

Prepare the beef: Season the filet with pepper. Fold the thin tail piece over itself, and if needed, shape the larger head piece into as long a shape as possible. Wrap the bacon strips around the filet, leaving some space between each strip (don't be tempted to cover the filet completely with bacon; too much bacon will overwhelm the flavor of the beef). Using butcher's twine, tie the filet at regular intervals to keep the bacon in place and to even the shape of the beef as much as possible. If you're working ahead, refrigerate the filet until half an hour before you're ready to roast it. Heat the oven to 375°F. Season the meat liberally with salt and pepper. Tuck



the rosemary sprigs under the twine along the length of the filet. Set the roast on a rack in a roasting pan or rimmed baking sheet and put it in the oven. If there are drippings, periodically use a pastry brush or a spoon to remove excess fat that renders out of the bacon and brush it onto the roast (the rendered fat

may cause your oven to smoke a bit). If the bacon begins to brown too quickly, loosely tent the filet with foil for the rest of the cooking time. After 40 minutes, insert an instant-read thermometer deep into the thickest part of the meat; you're looking for a temperature of 128°F for medium rare (remember that the filet will continue to cook as it rests). Depending on its thickness, the filet should take 45 minutes to 1 hour. Remove the filet from the oven, tent it with foil, and let it rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

To serve: Reheat the sauce gently and thin it with a little water, if needed. Whisk in the rest of the butter. Cut the beef into ¾-inch slices and arrange on plates with the celery root purée. Drizzle on the sauce and serve.

(More recipes follow)

BUYING BEEF TENDERLOIN

Order a whole filet of beef from the butcher two to three days in advance. A whole filet weighs about four pounds trimmed (for eight guests, that allows for about eight ounces per person). Ask the butcher to trim it for you. You'll probably pay for the untrimmed weight, so be sure to ask for the scraps to use in a quick stir-fry later.

wrap the tenderloin with bacon



Tie the filet at ten intervals to secure the bacon slices and to create a neat package.

Tuck sprigs of rosemary under the twine to add extra flavor during roasting.



Celery Root & Apple Purée

Serves six to eight.

Make this silky, flavorful purée a couple of hours ahead and reheat it in a stainless-steel bowl over a pot of simmering water.

Kosher salt

½ lemon

2 large celery roots (about 4 pounds total)

1 apple (I like Winesap, Granny Smith, or Braeburn)

½ cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

Freshly grated nutmeg

Put a large pot of water on to boil, and salt it well (about 1 tablespoon is good). Squeeze the lemon half into a large bowl of cold water. Peel the celery root and the apple. Cut each into 1-inch chunks and put them in the lemon water while working with the rest. Remove the celery root and apple chunks from the lemon water, put them in the boiling water, and boil until the celery root is tender, about 25 minutes. Drain and return the celery root and apple chunks to the empty pot. Shake the pot over low heat, drying the contents this way until steam no longer rises from the pot, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a food processor. In a small saucepan over low heat, heat the cream and butter until the butter melts. Add 1 teaspoon salt and then, with the food processor running, add the cream mixture. Process to a smooth purée, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and nutmeg.

Butterscotch Custard

Serves eight.

You'll need eight ramekins or custard cups that hold eight ounces. I've taken the "Scotch" in "butterscotch" to heart and have added a healthy splash of whisky to this custard. If you want less, reduce it by a tablespoon or two.

FOR THE CUSTARD:

4 ounces (½ cup) unsalted butter

1 ½ cups packed dark brown sugar

¼ cup Scotch whisky

1 ½ cups heavy cream

1 cup milk

1 dozen egg yolks

FOR THE GARNISH:

¾ cup heavy cream

½ teaspoon granulated sugar

8 sprigs fresh mint (or another delicate herb, such as basil, tarragon, or lemon verbena)

Heat the oven to 325°F. Set eight 8-ounce ramekins or custard cups in a large 2- to 3-inch-deep pan. (If you don't have one large pan, use two smaller ones; you want to leave a little space between the ramekins for even cooking.)

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter and brown sugar together over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is melted and emulsified (it will still be slightly grainy and look like wet sand), about 15 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the Scotch—stand back and be careful; adding the whisky will make the mix-



ture spatter. In a small saucepan, heat the cream and milk just until they start to boil; stir into the brown sugar mixture. In a medium bowl, lightly whisk the egg yolks. Add a ladleful or so of the cream mixture to the yolks, whisking to combine. Continue adding the cream a ladleful or so at a time, whisking. Pass the mix-

ture through a fine sieve and then divide it evenly among the ramekins, leaving at least ½ inch space at the top. Position the pan on the oven rack and pour enough hot water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the pan with foil, poking a couple of holes in the corners. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, checking after 30 minutes, until there's a slight jiggle in the center of each custard cup (not a wavelike motion) when nudged (ramekins baked in a glass baking dish will take more time than those in a metal pan). If the custards need more cooking, cover the pan again with foil, checking for doneness every 3 minutes or so. Remove the pan from the oven, take the ramekins out of the water bath right away, and let cool at room temperature. When cool, transfer to the refrigerator to chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Whip the ¾ cup cream with the granulated sugar to medium peaks. Serve each custard with a dollop of the whipped cream and a sprig of mint.

Katy Sparks, a chef who lives in New York, is preparing to open Katy, her own restaurant. ♦



drink choices

Choose easy-drinking wines for this flavorful, simple menu

This delicious and uncomplicated menu calls for wines along the same theme. To get the meal off to just the right start, try a light, crisp sparkling wine; it's a great *apéritif* and can segue right into the first-course salad. The nonvintage Domaine J. Laurens Blancs de Blancs Brut (\$12) from southwestern France, or the nonvintage Roederer Estate Brut (\$18) from California's Anderson Valley in Mendocino are two good choices. The bacon-wrapped filet with wild mushroom sauce calls for a red with depth, concentrated fruit, and soft, polished tannins. I like the 2000 Penfolds Thomas Hylands Shiraz from Australia (\$15) and the

1998 Errazuriz Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (\$25) from Chile.

The butterscotch pudding includes a touch of Scotch whisky, and while the intense flavors and the alcohol in spirits can prove to be a challenge when choosing a dessert wine, it needn't stop you from sipping a little something alongside if you want. A wee dram of Drambuie (\$45), a heather-honey-based liqueur with a touch of Scottish malt whisky, would be a great partner for this rich and tasty dessert.

Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. He lives in San Francisco.

Brown-Butter Almond Cake

On the job as a pastry chef, I'm often fussing over elaborate cakes and meticulous pastries. But when I'm baking at home, my favorite desserts are those that keep the emphasis on the proverbial "less is more." That's why I love to make this brown-butter almond cake. I've borrowed a few tricks for boosting flavor from the savory cook's repertoire—toasting nuts and browning butter—and combined them with a classic pastry technique—making a soft meringue—to create a single-layer cake with satisfying flavor and a tender texture. My friends love this cake with just a simple dusting of confectioners' sugar, but sometimes I dress it up for an autumn evening by serving it with pears roasted in butter and sugar. As a bonus, I make an easy caramel sauce to drizzle over the cake by adding a little cream to the pan in which the pears were roasted.

Toasted nuts and brown butter set this cake apart

Two main components give this cake its delicate flavor: finely ground almonds and browned butter. I like to lightly toast the almonds first to really tease out their flavor. It only takes a few minutes in the oven for the almonds to turn a light golden brown. Just be sure to let them cool completely before grinding. When warm, the natural oils in the almonds turn to liquid, and



A few flavor-enhancing techniques turn this one-layer cake into an elegant cool-weather dessert

BY KATHERINE EASTMAN SEELEY

you risk ending up with ground nut butter.

Melting the butter until the milk solids turn brown adds another layer of nutty flavor to the cake. The French term for this butter is *beurre noisette*, or hazelnut butter. It gets this name from its color and aroma. I also like to stir a little rum into the melted butter (once it's cool) to add a sweet dimension to the cake without making it taste boozy.

A soft meringue gives this single-layer cake its volume

Since the butter for this cake is melted, you can't beat it with sugar for leavening as you would in a creamed-butter cake. Instead, I rely on the lifting power of whipped egg whites. Slowly adding sugar while you're beating the whites helps to add stability to the whipped whites and minimizes the risk of overbeating. With a soft meringue like this, folding will be smooth and easy, and you'll retain more volume than with a firm meringue that's lumpy and deflates easily.

Unlike an angel food cake, this cake will only rise about an inch in the oven, because the weight of the ground nuts works against the light foam. But it still requires a cake pan with about three-inch sides. A ten-inch springform pan works perfectly.

I love that this cake can be made ahead and served at room temperature. But I find it especially satisfying on a cool, fall night brought out to the table still warm from the oven.

Brown-Butter Almond Cake

Serves twelve to fourteen.

You can make this cake ahead and store it in the freezer in a double layer of plastic wrap for up to four weeks. To defrost the cake, unwrap it, set it on a rack, cover it loosely with a towel, and let it sit at room temperature for about 2 hours.

5 ounces (1 cup) whole almonds
5 ounces (10 tablespoons) unsalted butter; more for the pan
1½ cups granulated sugar
3¾ ounces (1 cup) cake flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
Pinch table salt
2 tablespoons dark rum
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼ cup sour cream
9 large egg whites, ideally at room temperature
¼ cup sliced almonds
Confectioners' sugar for dusting (optional)

Heat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 10-inch springform pan and line the bottom with a round of parchment or waxed paper.

Spread the whole almonds on a baking sheet and heat them in the oven, shaking the pan every couple of minutes,

until lightly toasted and aromatic, 5 to 9 minutes.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter and then continue to cook it for 5 to 7 minutes. Watch it carefully and when you see brown flecks in the bottom of the pan, immediately pour the butter into a medium bowl, scraping the pan with a spatula to get all the flecks. Set aside to let cool slightly.

In a food processor, pulse the whole almonds and ¾ cup of the sugar until finely ground. Pour the mixture into a medium bowl and stir in the cake flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

Stir the rum, vanilla extract, and sour cream into the browned butter.

Using a stand mixer or a hand mixer, beat the egg whites in a large, clean, dry bowl, beginning on low speed until they start to foam. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until the whites barely hold peaks. Beat in the remaining ¾ cup sugar in a very slow, steady stream; continue beating the whites until they hold soft peaks.

Scoop a large dollop of the egg whites into the butter mixture and stir it in. Gently fold half of the almond mixture into the remaining egg whites and then half of the butter mixture into the egg whites. Repeat, ending with the butter mixture.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Smooth the top with a spatula and give the pan a quick spin to even out the batter. Sprinkle with the sliced almonds. Bake in the middle rack of the oven until well risen and golden, 45 to 50 minutes. The center of the cake should spring back when pressed lightly.

Let the cake cool in the pan on a rack until warm to the touch, about 30 minutes. Run a knife around the inside edge of the pan and carefully flip the cake onto the rack to release it from the pan. Peel off the parchment. Gently flip the cake again onto a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature, dusted lightly with confectioners' sugar or with the roasted pears and caramel sauce at right.

Katherine Eastman Seeley, a pastry chef, writes about baking.

Tricks for boosting flavor



Toast the almonds before processing to heighten their flavor. Let them cool and then pulse them with the sugar until they have a gritty, almost sandy texture. The sugar helps absorb the oils and prevents the ground nuts from turning into a paste.



Brown the butter for an even nuttier taste. Swirl the milk solids around in the melted butter until the flecks turn a deep hazelnut brown. Transfer to a heatproof bowl to stop the cooking.

Making a tender cake



Whip the egg whites while gradually adding the sugar until the whites are glossy and hold soft peaks. The tip of the meringue should fall over slightly when the beaters are lifted.



Use a light touch to fold ingredients into the meringue. The ground almond mixture and the melted butter mixture are both heavy, so fold them into the whites gently and in small batches to maintain as much volume as possible.



Use a spatula to spread the batter evenly. Then give the pan a quick spin to finish leveling the batter. Top with sliced almonds.



For a simple presentation, dust lightly with confectioners' sugar. To really make an impression without a lot of extra work, add a side of roasted pears with caramel sauce (recipe below).

Roasted Pears with Caramel Sauce

Serves twelve to fourteen.

These delicious pears are a great accompaniment for the cake—or a simple dessert on their own with vanilla ice cream.

3 medium-size ripe Anjou or Bartlett pears
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 6 pieces
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup heavy cream

Heat the oven to 375°F. Peel and halve the pears lengthwise. Using a melon baller or a paring knife, cut out the stems and seeds.

Set the pears in a 10-inch ovenproof skillet. Sprinkle with the sugar and dot with the butter. Roast the pears, turning them every 10 minutes, until they're soft and the sugar and fruit juices have caramelized in the pan, 35 to 55 minutes. Transfer the pears to a cutting board and let cool slightly before slicing thinly.

Meanwhile, set the skillet on the stove over medium-high heat. Add the cream and bring it to a simmer. Stir with a wooden spoon until the caramel in the pan dissolves into the cream to make a smooth sauce. Simmer to thicken slightly, 3 to 5 minutes. To serve, pool some of the caramel sauce alongside a slice of the brown-butter almond cake. Spread a few pear slices in a fan shape over the sauce. ♦

IN THIS EDITION: safe cooking temperatures...a quicker way to core apples and pears...why you might be wary of “extra-tender” pork...a chicory primer...buying and storing Parmigiano Reggiano ...and the results of our dried pasta tasting.

favorite gadget



The turkey lifter

Roasting a turkey is pretty simple, except for the part where you have to transfer it from the roasting pan to the carving board. Before I discovered the Oxo turkey lifter, I used wads of paper towels to protect my hands while moving the heavy, unwieldy bird, but even with someone helping me, one of us always got burned by the roasting rack. Fortunately, the turkey lifter has put an end to the struggle. It's a

clever U-shaped metal contraption with a forked tip on one end and a comfortable rubber bulb handle on the other. You insert the tip into the turkey cavity and lift. The shape gives the lifter strength and leverage, so it's not only easy to move the turkey with just one hand, but it's also easy to tilt it to drain juices from the cavity into the roasting pan for gravy. For sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86. —J. A.

Separating eggs smartly

To get the best volume and stability out of whipped egg whites, it's crucial that your bowl and beaters be immaculately clean and that there be no trace of egg yolk in the whites (fat inhibits whipping). If you need to separate lots of eggs (as for the Brown-Butter Almond Cake on p. 73), separate each egg individually over a small bowl. This way, you'll be sure that each white is clean before adding it to the others in your beating bowl, and there's no chance that the last egg you separate will break its yolk and contaminate a bowl full of whites.

—Jennifer Armentrout,
test kitchen manager

at the market

Sorting out chicories

If you plan on trying our recipe for Quick Chicken Sauté with Walnuts & Orange Pan Sauce on p. 62, you'll need a head of curly endive, a member of the chicory family of greens. Sometimes it's difficult to distinguish curly endive from other leafy chicories at the market because they're so similar looking and not always consistently labeled. So here's a primer to help you hone in on the right one. —J. A.

Photos: Scott Phillips



All-Clad (far left) and Le Creuset (middle and right) are just two manufacturers of high-quality Dutch ovens.

What we mean by...

Dutch oven

When we call for a “Dutch oven” in our recipes (see the pork loin recipes on p. 53, for example), what we’re asking you to use is a large, heavy-gauge pot that’s wider than it is deep and has a tight-fitting lid. This type of pot can be used both on the stovetop and in the oven. It’s especially useful for braising and stewing, which usually begin with browning on the stove before going into the oven, where the tight-fitting lid helps seal in steam to create a self-basting atmosphere. Typically, a second stint on the stovetop follows the oven period to reduce the cooking liquid to a saucy consistency.

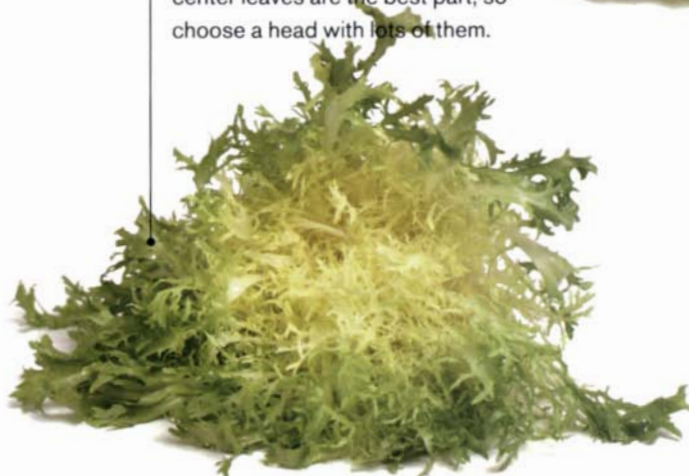
Most high-quality cookware manufacturers offer good Dutch ovens, which may also be called “flame-proof casseroles.” In the test kitchen, we’re especially fond of our collection of Le Creuset casseroles, which are cast iron with an enamel coating. The cast iron gives you great heat retention, while the coating makes the pan nonreactive and easier to care for. Le Creuset casseroles (which, just to confuse matters, may also be called “French ovens”) come in both round and oval shapes in several capacities and exterior colors. For sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86.

—J. A.



CURLY ENDIVE (a.k.a. chicory or curly chicory) has narrow stems and frilly, very curly leaves. It can be eaten raw in salads, but cooking mellows its assertively bitter flavor. Look for heads with deep-green outer leaves and a white to pale-yellow heart. The stem end shouldn’t show signs of browning, nor should the outer leaves look wilted or have black tips.

FRISÉE is essentially baby curly endive. Its tender leaves are finer and its flavor is milder than its more mature cousin. It’s a favorite of French cooks for salads, especially when paired with a warm bacon vinaigrette. When buying, look for the same quality indicators as for curly endive. The pale center leaves are the best part, so choose a head with lots of them.



ESCAROLE (a.k.a. common chicory, broad chicory, or Bata-vian endive) has wide, succulent stems and leaves that look more crumpled than curly. It also has a bitter flavor, though somewhat less so than curly endive. It’s eaten both raw and cooked. Avoid escarole with especially thick or tough-looking outer leaves.



Stock up on cranberries

As the cranberry crop reaches peak harvest time in October and November, cranberries become abundant and sale prices abound. Because cranberries freeze really well, it makes sense to snap up extra bags when they go on sale and stash the unopened bags in your freezer. Later on in the spring or summer, when fresh cranberries have disappeared from the markets, you'll get to rediscover them and use them in all sorts of baked goods, and maybe make a cranberry relish, too. —J. A.

A quick sauce from your electric chopper

While working on the review of small electric choppers on p. 20, I came up with a fresh sauce recipe to put the choppers through their paces. As a result, I wound up with lots of it in my fridge, but fortunately, it's really versatile. Try it with beef, chicken, fish, pork, pasta, beans, or roasted vegetables. Mixed with a little mayonnaise, the sauce makes a great dressing for chicken and potato salads, too.

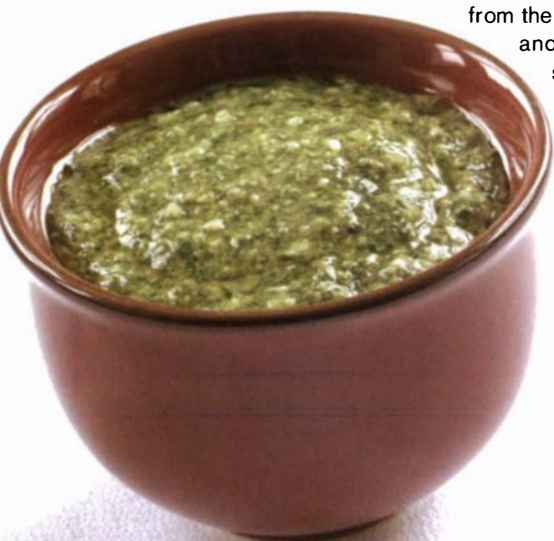
—Maryellen Driscoll,
editor at large

Green Herb & Caper Sauce

Yields about 1½ cup.

- 1 lemon**
- ½ cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves**
- ½ cup loosely packed basil leaves**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon pine nuts**
- 2 teaspoons drained and rinsed capers**
- 1 clove garlic**
- Kosher salt to taste**

Using a vegetable peeler, peel two lengthwise strips of zest from the lemon. Halve the lemon and squeeze out 1½ tablespoons of juice. In a chopper, combine the lemon zest and juice with the herbs, olive oil, pine nuts, capers, and garlic. Pulse until the sauce has the somewhat coarse consistency of a pesto. Season to taste with salt.



Safe, but not overcooked

The proper handling and cooking of meats and poultry is crucial for preventing foodborne illness. The USDA has guidelines for the safe cooking of meats and poultry, but as a government agency, it's more interested in being foolproof than in cooking flavorful foods, and its guidelines actually exceed safe cooking temperatures by several degrees, potentially resulting in dry, overcooked meat.

Although small children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are naturally more at risk than others to foodborne illnesses and should follow USDA guidelines, most people can safely cook meat and poultry following the *Fine Cooking* guidelines below. Our guide-

lines adhere to the 2001 Food Code, a set of food safety statutes issued by the FDA for food-service establishments.

Use an instant-read thermometer to check temperatures in the center of the food. For maximum juiciness, allow cooked meats and poultry to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before carving so their internal juices have a chance to redistribute. The larger the cut of meat or poultry, the more the internal temperature will continue to rise during the resting period (a phenomenon known as carryover cooking), so to compensate, subtract about five degrees from the temperature for larger roasts.

—Rob Gavel,
test kitchen intern

Safe cooking guidelines for meat

USDA recommended internal temperatures	Fine Cooking recommended internal temperatures
Chicken and turkey (whole and parts)*	
180°F (170°F for breasts)	breast: 160° to 165°F thigh: 170° to 175°F
Beef, veal, and lamb (steaks and roasts)*	
rare: not recommended medium rare: 145°F medium: 160°F well done: 170°F	rare: 125° to 130°F medium rare: 130° to 135°F medium: 140° to 150°F medium well: 155° to 165°F well done: not recommended
Fresh pork (chops and roasts)*	
medium: 160°F well done: 170°F	medium: 145° to 150°F medium well: 155° to 165°F

*Both the USDA and *Fine Cooking* recommend cooking all ground meats to a minimum of 160°F; ground turkey, 170°F.

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Getting to the core quickly

Many people core apples and pears by cutting the fruit in quarters and then cutting the core out of each quarter. While this method works well enough, it's slow and results in awkwardly shaped pieces of fruit. Here's a faster way of getting rid of the core; it's especially useful when you're dealing with lots of fruit for recipes like the applesauce on p. 18. Note: If your recipe calls for peeling, do it before you slice. —J. A.



1. Hold the fruit upright, try to judge where the core is, and slice off two opposite sides as close to the core as possible.



2. Rotate the fruit and slice off the two remaining sides to get a rectangular core piece and four flat-sided pieces of fruit (two wide and two narrow).



3. The side pieces will now lie obediently on your cutting board for slicing or dicing.

Buyer beware of “extra-tender” pork?

As producers continue to raise leaner pork and cooks continue to overcook it, the problem of dry, tasteless pork has become notorious. In response, pork producers have borrowed technology from the poultry industry used to “enhance” turkeys, and now an estimated 50% or more of fresh pork in retail markets has been treated to make it juicier. Much of it is labeled “extra tender” or “guaranteed tender.”

The basic premise is this: The fresh meat is treated with sodium phosphate and water, which works to uncoil (denature) muscle protein fibers just enough so that they

can hold more water. The resulting meat remains juicier when cooked—even when overcooked—and since most tasters perceive juiciness as tenderness, the pork gets positive reviews.

The best of this new generation of pork is treated with a 10% or weaker solution and has only a slightly “bouncy” texture but a distinct saline flavor. The worst are the more concentrated solutions and those that contain flavorings and marinades, making the meat mushy and unpleasant tasting. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires that treated pork carry an ingredient label, so search for the very fine print.

In our tests, we found that we prefer natural, unadulterated pork for its cleaner, more authentic pork flavor. If we set flavor aside, we found that a treated pork chop will indeed remain juicier than an untreated one when overcooked.

To us, the best way to get great flavor and texture is to buy untreated pork and brine it yourself (see Food Science, p. 30). That way, you can enhance juiciness and flavor without risking mushiness or off flavors. You'll also get a better brown sear on home-brined pork than on treated pork.

—Molly Stevens,
contributing editor

tip

If you're following a recipe that calls for a small flameproof roasting pan and you don't have one, a large heavy-duty ovenproof skillet, preferably with straight sides, makes a fine substitute.

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ingredient

Parmigiano Reggiano

Have you ever wondered why Italian Parmigiano Reggiano is so pricey compared to domestic versions? Take one taste and you'll know. True Parmigiano Reggiano has a heady fragrance, an intensely nutty flavor, and a texture that simply can't be duplicated by the knockoffs. Some pre-grated imitation varieties (labeled "Parmesan") contain nondairy fillers and often have a waxy flavor and texture. That's why we make a point of calling for the real thing in our recipes.

What to buy: Genuine Parmigiano Reggiano has a distinctive tan-colored rind that's stamped repetitively with its name. If you're lucky enough to have a cheese shop near you, shop there. Turnover is likely to be higher, increasing your chance of getting a really fresh chunk. Ask for a piece with the rind attached; it helps the cheese stay fresh.

If you buy from a grocery store, look for a piece with the

latest sell-by date. It shouldn't have any holes, and it should look neither dry nor oily. Don't buy it already grated.

If you simply can't find real Parmigiano, Italian Grana Padano is your best substitute. It's produced in a manner similar to Parmigiano.

How to store: Tightly wrap your wedge of Parmigiano in foil and store it in a dry section of your refrigerator's vegetable crisper. It will keep its best flavor for about a month. If the cheese dries out during storage, wrap it in a moist paper towel and then in foil for a day before rewrapping just in foil. Freezing isn't recommended.

How to use: Parmigiano Reggiano's flavor is delicate and deteriorates quickly when exposed to oxygen. For this reason, always grate or shave the cheese as close as possible to the time you'll be using it.

—R. G.

Frico (Cheese Crisps)

Yields 8 crisps.

These cheese crisps can be made in a non-stick sauté pan one by one, but it's more efficient to make them in batches on baking sheets in the oven. The goal is to let the cheese melt to create a texture that's lacy but that still holds together, so be sure to sprinkle the cheese lightly. Serve as an hors d'oeuvre or to garnish a green salad.

1 cup finely shredded or grated (not chopped) Parmigiano Reggiano (you can also try Asiago, aged Cheddar, aged Gouda, Manchego, or another hard cheese)
½ teaspoon lightly toasted crushed cumin seed or fennel seed (or another spice if you like)

Heat the oven to 375°F. Cover two large baking sheets with parchment. Combine the cheese and spice. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the mixture to form a 4- to 4½-inch round. Spread the cheese evenly with a fork. Repeat with the rest of the mixture, leaving 2 inches between each round. Bake each sheet (one at a time) until the crisps just begin to color, 6 to 8 minutes. Don't let them fully brown or the cheese will be bitter. Use a spatula to lift the edges of the crisps and loosen them from the pan. Remove the crisps and immediately lay them over a rolling pin or the side of a bottle to give them a curved shape. Or for a flat frico, just transfer to paper towels. When cooled, store the crisps in an airtight container for up to two days.

—John Ash, *Fine Cooking* #40



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tasting panel

Dried pasta

A great Bolognese sauce like the one on p. 67 needs an equally good pasta to stand up to it. Since most of us are more likely to grab a box of dried pasta than to make our own, we decided to hold a blind tasting of seven major brands of dried penne pasta. We cooked the pasta in salted water until al dente and tossed it with just enough neutral-flavored cooking oil to keep the drained pasta from sticking together. The pastas were then tasted plain at a warm temperature. The differences between them were subtle but important. While none of the brands we tasted would have ruined a dish, only a few were able to cook up to and maintain the integrity of a good-quality pasta—one that has a mildly sweet wheaty flavor and is resilient and toothy, not mushy or gummy.

—M. D.

Top pick

1. BARILLA

The clear favorite with a toothy, bouncy-chewy texture—substantial and not gummy at all—and a mild and nicely balanced wheaty sweetness. (1 pound, \$1.09)



TASTING RESULTS

Pastas numbered in order of preference

2. BIONATURAE

This organic pasta from Tuscany has a firm, chewy texture that held up with time. The flavor is clean and well rounded, with a hint of nuttiness. Available nationally at health-food stores. (1 pound, \$1.99)



3. DE CECCO

Well liked for its overall delivery of a resilient chew and light wheat flavor, described as fresh and clean but somewhat bland. (1 pound, \$1.69)



4. PRINCE

This pasta cooked up firm but somewhat starchy and gummy. Tasters had a hard time detecting any flavor. (1 pound, \$0.99)



5. MUELLER'S PASTA LABELLA

With a texture that's a little gummy and a flavor that's slightly sweet but mostly bland, this pasta was summed up as "not great, but it won't ruin a meal." (1 pound, \$0.89)



6. SAN GIORGIO

With a thinner consistency than most other brands of penne, this one lacks "tooth" and easily turns mushy and soft. Wheaty flavor is lacking. (1 pound, \$1.45)



7. RONZONI

A disappointingly gummy texture that "sticks to your molars" placed this brand at the bottom of our list. One-dimensional, flat flavor didn't help its cause. (1 pound, \$0.99)





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Enjoying Wine (p. 26)

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Q&A (p. 24)

For cleaning stainless-steel cookware, try **Bar Keepers Friend** (www.barkeepersfriend.com); most supermarkets and hardware stores carry it. Chris Sommer from All-Clad also suggests using Stainless-Steel Cookware

Cleanser from **Chef's Catalog** (800-338-3232; www.chefs-catalog.com).

World Cuisines

(p. 32)

You can order preserved lemons for the Moroccan-spiced chicken from **Adriana's Caravan** (800-316-0820; www.adrianascaravan.com). A ½-pound jar of Moroccan lemons is \$7.95. Adriana's also carries Spanish saffron; a 2-gram packet is \$6.50.

From Our Test Kitchen (p. 76)

The Oxo turkey lifter and Le Creuset enameled cast-iron Dutch ovens are widely available in cookware stores. Or try **A Cook's Wares** (800-915-9788; www.cookswares.com), where the turkey lifter is \$11 and the Dutch ovens range from \$70 to \$270.

Brown-Butter Almond Cake (p. 73)

To make the almond cake, you can buy a 10x3-inch springform pan from the **Baker's Catalog** (800-827-6836; www.kingarthurflour.com).

Ragù alla Bolognese (p. 64)

For an inexpensive food mill to purée the tomatoes in the ragù, try the 1-quart plastic Moulinex available



for \$18.50 at www.cooking.com (800-663-8810).

Dinner with Friends (p. 68)

To order wild mushrooms for the beef tenderloin sauce, look up **Earthy Delights** (800-367-4709; www.earthy.com) or **Gourmet Mushrooms** (800-789-9121; www.gmmushrooms.com).



Potato Galette (p. 57)

Bridge Kitchenware (212-688-4220; www.bridgekitchenware.com) carries tart pans with removable bottoms for making potato galettes. An 8-inch pan is \$4.25. A 4¾-inch pan (\$3.75) is perfect for individual portions.

Thanksgiving Menu (p. 44)

For sturdy, high-quality roasting pans for your holiday turkey, try **Sur La Table** (800-243-0852; www.surlatable.com). **Willie Bird Turkeys** (877-494-5592; www.williebird.com) sells organic turkeys by mail; an 18-pound bird with overnight shipping is about \$100. For the pound cake, **Kitchen Conservatory** (866-862-2433; www.kitchenconservatory.com) sells a Nordicware 12-cup bundt pan for \$23.95.



FROM THE BACK COVER

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In Season (p. 16)

To buy high-quality apples, try **Applesource** in Chapin, Illinois (800-588-3854; www.applesource.com), which sells harvested fruits by mail from August to December. **Tree-mendus Fruit Farm** (616-782-7101; www.treemendus-fruit.com), in Eau Claire, Michigan, is another good source. You can mail-order harvested fruits from September to December. **Southmeadow Fruit Gardens** (616-422-2411; www.southmeadowfruitgardens.com) in Baroda, Michigan, offers an incredible selection of antique apple varieties for planting in your garden. **Sonoma Antique Apple Nursery** (805-467-2509; www.applenursery.com) in Healdsburg, California, also sells a wide selection of old apple varieties.

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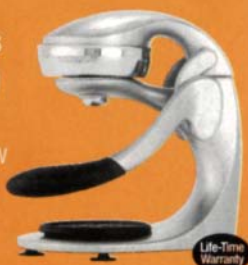
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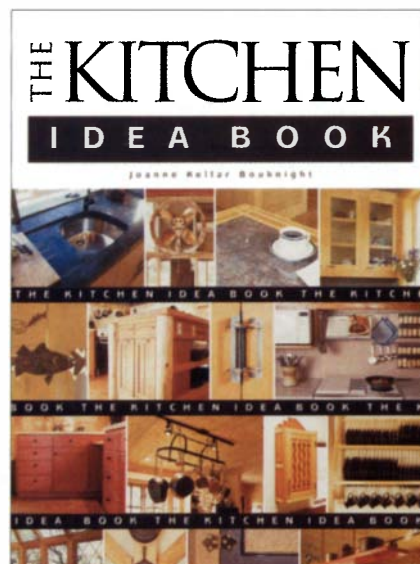
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nutritioninformation

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
	total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
In Season - p. 16												
Grown-Up Applesauce	130	40	0	24	4.5	2.5	1.5	0.5	10	0	2	per ½ cup serving
World Cuisines - p. 32												
Moroccan Chicken w/Preserved Lemons	350	170	36	10	19	4	11	3	60	570	1	per well-rinsed lemon
Preserved Lemons	30	0	2	17	0	0	0	0	0	960	4	
Thanksgiving Dinner - p. 44												
Butter-Rubbed, Cider-Glazed Roast Turkey	540	220	64	7	24	9	8	5	175	400	1	based on 16 servings
Dressing w/Apples, Bacon & Onions	330	120	12	41	13	5	6	2	95	810	4	based on 16 servings
Purée of Yukon Gold Potatoes w/Parmesan	180	90	4	19	10	6	3	0	30	310	2	
Cranberry-Orange Relish w/ Ginger	60	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	90	2	
Brussels Sprouts w/Hazelnuts & Lemon	160	110	5	12	12	3	7	1	10	150	5	⅓ cake (w/o garnish)
Pumpkin & Ginger Pound Cake	320	150	3	42	17	8	5	3	85	150	1	
Pork Loin - p. 50												
Rack of Pork w/an Herb-Mustard Crust	450	270	31	11	30	11	11	6	110	500	1	w/o potatoes
Oven-Roasted Potatoes	230	80	4	34	9	1	7	1	0	330	3	based on 6 servings
Pork Loin w/Prunes & Dried Apricots	400	160	34	19	18	7	7	3	100	240	3	based on 6 servings
Roast Loin of Pork w/ Garlic & Rosemary	350	190	34	3	21	6	12	2	95	330	0	based on 6 servings
Green Beans - p. 54												
Green Beans w/Tomatoes & Onions	160	100	5	14	11	2	7	1	5	760	4	based on 6 servings
Green Beans w/Mushrooms & Cream	440	330	6	22	37	16	17	2	70	640	4	based on 6 servings
Green Beans w/Pancetta, Garlic & Herbs	100	50	7	6	5	1	3	1	15	640	2	
Green Beans w/Toasted Slivered Almonds	170	140	3	6	16	7	6	2	30	250	3	
Potato Galette - p. 57												
Yukon Gold Gruyère Galette	230	130	10	15	15	5	8	1	25	270	1	based on 6 servings
Quick Chicken Sautés - p. 60												
Chicken Sauté w/Asparagus & Tomatoes	480	300	37	9	34	11	18	3	125	570	2	based on 8 servings
Chicken Sauté w/Walnuts & Chicory	470	270	37	13	30	7	16	5	110	570	3	
Chicken Sauté w/Tomatoes, Olives & Basil	360	160	38	11	17	3	11	2	100	1650	3	
Chicken Sauté w/Snow Peas & Teriyaki	440	160	39	22	18	3	8	5	95	1700	2	
Chicken Sauté w/Mushrooms & Lima Beans	630	380	42	19	42	17	19	3	175	610	4	
Ragù all Bolognese - p. 64												
Ragù alla Bolognese	280	190	15	7	21	8	10	2	65	620	1	based on 8 servings, w/o pasta
Dinner with Friends - p. 68												
Endive Salad w/ Blue Cheese, Pears & Nuts	260	180	6	19	20	4	7	7	12	290	4	based on 8 servings
Filet of Beef Wrapped in Bacon	390	200	38	5	22	9	8	1	125	300	1	based on 8 servings
Celery Root & Apple Purée	200	100	4	25	11	6	3	1	30	350	5	based on 8 servings
Butterscotch Custard	610	400	7	44	45	26	14	2	445	70	0	
Almond Cake - p. 73												
Brown-Butter Almond Cake	280	140	5	30	15	6	6	2	25	120	2	based on 14 servings
Roasted Pears w/Caramel Sauce	90	60	0	8	6	4	2	0	20	5	1	based on 14 servings
From Our Test Kitchen - p. 76												
Green Herb & Caper Sauce	60	50	1	3	6	1	4	1	0	75	1	per tablespoon
Frico (Cheese Crisps)	80	60	5	0	6	4	2	0	20	115	0	per crisp
Quick & Delicious - p. 94C												
Rolled Chicken Breasts w/Prosciutto	420	180	54	4	20	4	12	2	140	940	1	w/o potatoes
Warm Spinach Salad w/ Bacon & Walnuts	250	210	8	3	24	10	8	4	30	440	1	based on 3 servings
Pork, Sweet Potato & Apple Sauté	610	320	35	38	36	13	18	2	125	430	5	
Tuscan-Poached Eggs	360	160	14	37	18	4	10	2	215	740	5	
Homemade Cheese Ravioli w/ Broccoli Raab	380	170	17	36	19	7	9	2	35	660	3	based on 4 servings
Spanish Rice w/Shrimp	320	100	11	42	11	2	8	1	70	690	1	based on 4 servings
Leek & Potato Soup w/ Garlic Toast	580	180	17	87	20	8	9	2	35	910	8	w/o rice
Vietnamese Garlic Beef over Lettuce Greens	340	190	29	8	21	4	14	2	65	570	3	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe

gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific

quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.



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READER SERVICE NO. 99

Family apple farming, a dwindling trade

BY AMY ALBERT

There's a rich history of apple farming in Sonoma County, California, but smaller, family-run ranches are dwindling as wine grape growing eclipses fruit farming. Lee Walker and his wife, Shirley, own and run Walker Apples, a family business since the early 1900s. The Walkers grow 26 varieties that they sell to markets and at their farmstand. Gravenstein (a Sonoma trademark and "the very best pie apple," says Lee) is one of their specialties, as are older, rarer varieties like Baldwin and Arkansas Black.

Morning coastal fog and moderate altitude go a long way toward growing the tastiest apples—but there's another factor. "We do it all ourselves, so we take special care," says Lee. "Shirley says I walk through the orchards so much, she figures I've named all the trees."

—Amy Albert, senior editor ♦

York Imperials are checked for size by hand with a ring sizer. Both size and sugar content determine if an apple is ready for picking; Lee Walker examines a drop of juice through a refractometer to measure sweetness. "The sugar concentration that determines ripeness differs depending on the variety," he says. John Walker picks Golden Delicious apples, while his wife, Cindy, hand-packs Jonathans.



Photos: Amy Albert



Rolled Chicken Breasts with Prosciutto & Asparagus

Serves four.

3½ Tbs. olive oil
½ lb. asparagus (about 10 large spears), trimmed, peeled, and cut into 2-inch pieces
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 large boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 2 lb. total)
4 large basil leaves, torn into large pieces
4 thin slices prosciutto (about 2 oz. total)
8 shavings (2 inches each) Parmigiano Reggiano
1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
Roasted potatoes for serving

Heat the oven to 450°F. Heat a 12-inch ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Once it's hot, add 1½ Tbs. of the oil and then the asparagus. Season with salt and pepper and sauté, shaking the pan often, until the asparagus is slightly tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer the asparagus to a plate and remove the pan from the heat.

Lay the chicken on a cutting board and make a horizontal cut in each, starting on the thickest side of the breast and cutting almost completely through to the other. Open up the breast like a book. Pound with a meat mallet or a small heavy skillet to flatten. Over both parts of each breast, arrange an even layer of the basil, prosciutto, Parmigiano, and a small handful of the cooked asparagus. Turn each breast so a long side is facing you. Roll the chicken away from you, folding it tightly over itself. Use two toothpicks to seal the rolled area. Season with salt and pepper.

Put the skillet back on medium-high heat, and once it's very hot, add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil and the chicken rolls. Cook the chicken on both sides until well browned, 3 minutes per side. Add 2 Tbs. water and the balsamic vinegar and scrape the bottom of the pan to incorporate any browned bits. Partially cover the skillet, put it in the oven, and roast until the chicken is cooked through (an instant-read thermometer should read 160°F), 12 to 15 minutes. Let the chicken rest for a couple of minutes, cut the rolls diagonally in half or slice thinly, and serve with a spoonful of the balsamic sauce, accompanied by roasted potatoes.

RECIPES FROM THE FINE COOKING STAFF



Warm Spinach Salad with Bacon, Walnuts & Goat Cheese

Serves four as a first course.

¼ small red onion, very thinly sliced
3 Tbs. sherry vinegar
4½ oz. thick-cut bacon (about 4 slices), cut into ½-inch pieces
3 oz. baby spinach (about 8 cups loosely packed), washed
Kosher salt
1½ tsp. chopped fresh mint (optional)
Scant ¼ cup shelled walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped
2 oz. goat cheese, crumbled
Freshly ground black pepper

In a small bowl, soak the onion slices in the sherry vinegar.

In a heavy skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp, about 7 minutes. With tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a plate that's

lined with paper towels. Crumble when cool.

Pour off all but 3 Tbs. fat from the pan. Strain the vinegar from the onions into the pan and stir with a wooden spoon to loosen the browned bits and emulsify the dressing. Put the spinach in a medium bowl and drizzle the warm dressing over it. Toss and season with salt to taste.

Divide the spinach among four plates and garnish with the mint, walnuts, onion, and goat cheese. Sprinkle with the crumbled bacon, season with pepper, and serve.



Pork, Sweet Potato & Apple Sauté

Serves two to three.

- 1 medium sweet potato (about 11 oz.), unpeeled**
- 1 medium yellow onion (about 6 oz.), peeled**
- 1 Golden Delicious apple, unpeeled**
- 1 small pork tenderloin (about 1 lb.)**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped or grated**
- 4 Tbs. cider vinegar**
- 2 Tbs. coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)**

Cut the sweet potato, onion, and apple into ½-inch cubes or pieces and set each aside separately. Slice the pork into 12 to 14 medallions about ¾ to 1 inch thick (don't worry if they're not all even). Season them with 1 tsp. salt and a little pepper and set aside.

Melt 1 Tbs. each of the butter and oil in a large straight-sided skillet over medium heat. Add the sweet potato pieces in one layer and season with about ¾ tsp. salt and a little pepper. Sauté them until they're brown and crusty on most sides, about 10 minutes. (Don't stir often; let them sit in the pan for 2 or 3 minutes on each side before flipping with a metal spatula.) Carefully add 3 Tbs. water to the pan, and, as it sizzles, cover the pan briefly (about 1 minute) to let the potato steam. Uncover, stir, and transfer to a bowl.

Turn the heat to medium high, heat another 1 Tbs. each butter and oil in the pan, and add the onion and apple. Season with ½ tsp. salt. Sauté, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft and both the onion and apple are nicely browned around the edges (the bottom of the pan will be brown), 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in the ginger, sauté briefly, and pour 2 Tbs. cider vinegar and 2 Tbs. water into the pan. Remove the pan from the heat and stir to scrape up the browned bits. Transfer the contents of the pan to the bowl with the sweet potatoes.

Put the pan back over medium-high heat and add the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and 1 Tbs. oil. As soon as the butter sizzles loudly, add the pork medallions in one layer. Cook for 2 minutes (they'll be lightly browned), turn over, and cook for another 2 minutes. Transfer the pork to a plate. Carefully pour in the remaining 2 Tbs. cider vinegar and 2 Tbs. water, remove the pan briefly from the heat, and scrape up the browned bits. Return the sweet potato mixture to the pan over the heat and stir until heated through. Put several pork slices in the middle of each of two or three warm plates. Fold the parsley, if using, into the sweet potato mixture and evenly mound it on top of the pork.



Tuscan Poached Eggs

Serves two to four.

- 2 Tbs. olive oil**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**
- 1 can (28 oz.) high-quality diced tomatoes (like Muir Glen)**
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 4 large eggs**
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh chives**
- 2 Tbs. freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 6 thick slices of good crusty bread, drizzled with oil and toasted**

Set a rack in the upper half of the oven and heat the broiler to high. On the stovetop, heat a 10-inch, straight-sided, ovenproof skillet over medium heat, and once it's hot, add the oil and garlic. Cook the garlic, stirring often so it won't burn, until it begins to turn light golden brown, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes and thyme and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce thickens slightly, about 8 minutes.

Discard the thyme sprigs and season the mixture liberally with salt and pepper. Reserve about one-third of the sauce in a bowl and spread the remaining sauce evenly around the skillet. Reduce the heat to medium low, crack the eggs into the tomato sauce, and lightly spoon the reserved tomato sauce over the whites of the eggs (not on the yolks). Cover the pan and cook for 3 minutes so the eggs set slightly. Uncover the skillet and set it under the broiler until the yolks firm up slightly but are still soft to the touch, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven. Sprinkle with the chives and cheese. Serve immediately with the toasted bread.

tips

- ❖ Try serving the eggs on top of sautéed spinach or lay a slice of prosciutto over them.
- ❖ For a more elegant presentation, divide the eggs and sauce into four small gratin dishes before broiling.



Homemade Cheese Ravioli with Broccoli Raab, Parmesan & Pine Nuts

Serves two as a main course or four as a first course.

¾ cup whole-milk or part-skim ricotta
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano; more for serving
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
24 wonton wrappers (3½x3 inches each)
½ bunch (about 10 oz.) broccoli raab, tough stems trimmed
2 Tbs. olive oil
2 Tbs. pine nuts
1 large clove garlic, chopped
1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken broth
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
Lemon wedges for serving

Fill a large, wide pot with water and bring it to a boil. Meanwhile, stir together the ricotta, 3 Tbs. of the Parmigiano, ¼ tsp. salt, and about 10 twists of pepper. Lay out 12 wonton wrappers on your work surface and put 1 Tbs. of the filling in the center of each wrapper. Dip your finger in water and moisten all four edges of the first filled wrapper. Lay another plain wrapper on top; gently press closely around the filling to squeeze out air, and then press the edges tightly to seal the two layers. Repeat with the other wrappers, to make 12 ravioli.

When the water is boiling, add 1 Tbs. salt and the broc-

coli raab and cook until the florets are barely tender and the stems are crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain. (Keep the water boiling for the ravioli.) Chop the raab roughly into about ½-inch pieces; you should have about 1 cup.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pine nuts and sauté, stirring constantly, until they're deep golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on a paper towel. Add the garlic, sauté for 30 seconds, and then add the chopped broccoli raab. Add the chicken broth, increase the heat to high, and bring to a boil. Boil until there's about ½ cup liquid surrounding the raab. Add the remaining Parmigiano and swirl to blend.

Meanwhile, boil the ravioli until tender, about 3 minutes, moving them around with a spoon so they don't stick together. Carefully drain the ravioli and arrange them in shallow soup plates. Stir the lemon juice into the broth, taste for salt and pepper, and then spoon it and the broccoli raab over the ravioli. Sprinkle with the pine nuts and serve with the lemon wedges to squeeze over.



Spanish Rice with Shrimp

Serves two as a main course; four as a first course.

½ lb. unpeeled, uncooked shrimp (about 2 cups; 18 to 20 large shrimp)
½ ripe tomato, coarsely chopped
2 cups water
1 cup clam juice
Pinch crushed red chile flakes (or cayenne)
⅛ tsp. sweet paprika
1 tsp. kosher salt
3 Tbs. olive oil
½ medium onion, chopped
4 large cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
1 cup medium-grain rice
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)
Lemon wedges for serving

Peel the shrimp. Put the shells in a small saucepan with the tomato, water, clam juice, chile flakes, paprika, and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a 10-inch skillet with the oil on medium-low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until softened, 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove the shrimp shell broth from the heat and strain through a sieve into a 4-cup measure. You should have 2¾ cups liquid; if there is less, add water to compensate.

Increase the heat under the skillet to medium high. Stir in the rice, and cook, stirring frequently, until it becomes somewhat translucent, about 1 minute. Add the strained broth, spread the rice into an even layer, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer vigorously for 5 minutes. Arrange the shrimp on top of the rice and simmer until the rice and liquid are at the same level, about another 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer gently until the rice is just tender and the liquid is absorbed, about another 10 minutes. (It's all right if the rice starts to stick to the bottom of the pan—it can be brown—but don't let it burn.) Remove from the heat, cover, and let rest for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley, if using, and serve with the lemon wedges.

tip

❖ You can use frozen shrimp, as long as they're uncooked and unpeeled. Thaw them under cold running water.



Leek & Potato Soup with Garlic Toast

Yields about 8 cups soup; serves four.

2 lb. leeks (about 3; dark green tops discarded), sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick (about 3 cups)
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes (about 3 large), peeled and cut into ¾-inch dice
¼ tsp. celery seed
3 cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth; more if needed
1 tsp. kosher salt; more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Pinch chili powder
1½ cups milk
1 small French baguette
1 clove garlic, cut in half
2 Tbs. olive oil

Separate the sliced leeks into rings and soak in a big bowl of cool water for a few minutes to let the grit settle to the bottom of the bowl. Scoop them out carefully and drain. In a soup pot over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the leeks, potatoes, and celery seed and sauté until the vegetables are slightly softened, about 5 minutes, stirring often to prevent sticking. Add the broth, salt, pepper, and chili powder. Bring to a boil over high heat; reduce to a steady simmer over medium low. Cover and cook until the leeks and potatoes are quite soft,

about 15 minutes. Stir in the milk; return to a gentle simmer. Working in batches, purée briefly in a blender. If the soup is too thick, whisk in more broth until it reaches the consistency you like.

Meanwhile, make the garlic toast: Adjust an oven rack to the top position and heat the broiler to high. Cut the baguette into sharply diagonal slices about ½ inch thick (they should be long, narrow slices). Put the bread on a baking sheet, firmly rub both sides with the garlic halves, brush both sides with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Broil until the bread is toasted and crisp, about 2 minutes per side.

Taste the soup for seasonings and serve immediately with the garlic toast.

tip

❖ This makes a good weekday supper with a salad like the Warm Spinach Salad with Bacon, Walnuts & Goat Cheese (over).



Vietnamese Garlic Beef over Lettuce Greens

Serves four.

1 lb. lean beef (like top round or flank steak), trimmed and thinly sliced across the grain into strips 1 inch wide and 2 to 3 inches long
1 Tbs. fish sauce
5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ tsp. granulated sugar
¼ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
1 small onion, thinly sliced
5 large cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
2 Tbs. apple-cider vinegar
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 large ripe tomato, cored and cut into chunks
1 head romaine lettuce, washed, drained, and torn into bite-size pieces
Cooked white rice for serving

In a medium bowl, combine the beef with the fish sauce, 1 Tbs. of the olive oil, ¼ tsp. salt, ½ tsp. pepper, the sugar, and the chile flakes. Mix well and set aside. Heat a large skillet or frying pan over medium-high heat. Add 2 Tbs. of the olive oil. When the oil is very hot, add the onions and garlic and cook, stirring, until they're slightly golden and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add the beef and cook, tossing and stirring briskly, until it reaches medium rare, about 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

In a nonreactive bowl, whisk together the vinegar and mustard. Add the remaining 2 Tbs. oil in a slow stream, whisking constantly. Season with ¾ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Drizzle the beef with 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette and toss to combine. Toss the lettuce with the remaining vinaigrette and garnish with the tomato. Lay the beef, onions, and garlic on top of the salad and serve immediately with the white rice.